

CASA

CONNECTION

County After School Activities

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LOUDOUN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

LOUDOUN.GOV/PRCS

FOR ACCESSIBILITY REQUESTS: CONTACT ADAPTREC@LOUDOUN.GOV, 703-777-0343, TTY: 711



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The Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) is open virtually while its centers are closed and programs canceled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. "We wanted to make sure that Loudoun's citizens can engage with us during this temporary closure and that we continue creating community through people, parks and programs," said Steve Torpy, PRCS Director.

The department launched a new webpage at loudoun.gov/prcscreatingcommunity featuring video playlists, a rotating video spotlight, virtual tours, how-to guides, children's activities, community resources and more. The page includes links to all of all of the department's Facebook pages, where followers can find engaging posts and videos daily. "We're temporarily closed, but we're here for you digitally as we learn to navigate this new environment. The response to the page has been positive and we feel that it may continue to serve citizens after normal operations resume," said Torpy. County parks remain open for self-directed trail and leisure use while practicing social distancing. Visit loudoun.gov/prcs or email prcs@loudoun.gov for more information.



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County After School Activities

We miss seeing you every day. We hope that everyone is staying healthy and safe. Our staff wants to help you continue to grow and learn. Please enjoy this newsletter.

CASA STAFF



Coping with Social Anxiety during Social Distancing

Helping reluctant kids stay connected

An article from Child Mind Institute

“She put all of her friends in boxes – her school friends were only for school, gymnastics friends were for the gym, and she never invited people over. But now she has no friends to call, and she’s desperate to talk to anyone.

He refuses to video chat because he doesn’t know what to talk about and “it’s not the same.”

Sound familiar? If your child was struggling with social anxiety before social distancing, it’s likely that it’s gotten worse. You want to help, but you’re in uncharted waters and it’s hard to know how. First of all, your kids are right – it’s not the same. For younger children, it’s tough to play through a screen. For older children (and adults!), it’s challenging to make eye contact and read social cues via video chat. You can only see head and shoulders, and even facial expressions can be hard to read, especially if the other person is moving around and reacting to things going on in their space. But the more you practice this kind of socializing, the easier it becomes, notes Janine Domingues, PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. “It’s okay to feel awkward in the beginning and get over that hump,” Dr. Domingues says. “In the beginning, what we’re doing is helping kids feel comfortable with feeling uncomfortable.”

Depending on what’s manageable for you and your family, you can experiment with some of the following strategies to help your child settle into these new social norms.

Open the Conversation

It sounds simple, but if your child is avoiding connecting with friends, ask why. They may feel overwhelmed by the amount of school calls, be uncomfortable with the format, not know what to say or worry about what others may think. Whatever the reason, don't argue. Instead, show empathy and talk about what's different or what upsets them. Just understanding your child's hesitation might reveal some simple solutions — if video chat is what they dislike, maybe a voice-only phone call would work better.

If your child resists sharing, talk about why social connections are important. Encourage them to connect with at least one person, and give examples of how your own social connections have helped you.

Still, it's important to respect their boundaries and show your child that you're on their side. "Ask them to give it a try, but give them an out," suggests Cindy Graham, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Maryland. "For instance, after a few minutes, you'll pretend it's time for lunch so they have an excuse to get off the phone if it's not going well. But if it is going well, they can say they're not hungry."

Ease into video chats and real-time communication

If video chats seem too daunting, don't jump right in. Instead, begin with email, texting or even writing letters. "Often their fear is getting in the way," Dr. Graham explains. "You can find a way around it by playing a game like Words with Friends where you don't have to be online at the same time. Build on social interactions this way, working towards an actual face-to-face connection when they're ready."

You can also try Marco Polo, a new app which allows you to make and send video messages back and forth. You can add filters, voice effects, draw or add text to your video, then send it to a friend. Encourage your child to make one or two videos a day and slowly increase the length or frequency, building up to a video chat.

Once your child is ready to try some real-time communication, a helpful way to practice is quick daily calls with a family member or someone else they already know and trust. “Start with grandparents because they typically have the time and really want to see their grandchildren,” suggests Michelle Kaplan, LCSW, a clinical social worker at the Child Mind Institute. “Plus, it’s generally easier for kids to ease into a new, uncomfortable format with adults they have a relationship with. You can also enlist older cousins or other willing adults — the more practice the better. Once your child is comfortable speaking to adults, then you can try it with a kid their own age.”

These same guidelines apply when it comes to remote learning. If your child is uncomfortable speaking up in a virtual classroom, talk to their teacher and ask to work up to real-time participation. They might start by sending the teacher ideas ahead of time and just listening during class, with their camera and microphone off. Then they might work up text chatting in real time or talking to the class while still keeping the camera off. Going slowly, trying different strategies and giving your child plenty of time to practice can help ease the challenges of this new format.

Calm anxiety by playing games

Games can be a great tool for helping your child get comfortable with video chatting, whether with peers or adults. They give everyone something specific to focus on, help distract your child from their nervousness and turn chatting into something that feels more like play than work.

For young children, try the following games, which can last as little as a minute or two:

Scavenger hunt: “Go find something fluffy and bring it right back!” Then, the child describes the object and asks the other person to find something.

I Spy: The child shows the other person around their room and then finds what the other person spies.

Would You Rather: Be an astronaut or a basketball player? Ski or go swimming? Learn French or Chinese? Plan ahead so your child can ask questions as well, without being put on the spot.

Silly Faces and Filters: Express how you're feeling, demonstrate what you're thinking or answer questions through filters and effects.

For older children, interactive games will help your child practice turn-taking, problem-solving, partner work and spontaneous conversations.

If both people have the same game at home: One player moves the pieces on the board while the other rolls the dice or picks the cards.

If one person has the game: You can play games like Boggle with only one game owner. They'll shake it up, take a picture and send it to the other player.

If both people have two devices: Play games like UNO!, Monopoly or Settlers of Catan online with one device while connecting via video on the other.

Get creative: You don't need a board or pieces — our houses are full of useful items that can pull double duty as a game and an opportunity to help your child improve their partnership skills. For example, with just paper and a pen, your child can draw a tic-tac-toe board and the other player can tell them where to write their X or O.

Build up to virtual playdates and group chats

Once your child feels comfortable with it, a real-time playdate is perhaps the best way to help your child enjoy interacting with peers from home. If your child wasn't interested in playdates before, you'll need to help them make connections now. Kaplan recommends asking them who they miss the most or if they can think of any kids with similar interests. Reach out to parents through your school's directory or their extracurricular activity instructor. Set your child up for success by telling the parent your child would like to play a game with theirs and how long you hope the call will last.

If your child was very rigid and didn't interact with other children outside of the places where they "belonged" (if your daughter only liked to see soccer friends at practice, for example), then work with your child's rigidity by creating a schedule. On Mondays, chat with a school friend, on Wednesdays a friend from karate, and a cousin on Fridays. Keeping things structured and predictable can ease anxiety and give your child events to look forward to. For older kids, group chats and virtual activities such as Netflix Party or Houseparty are also important tools for socializing right now. And, according to Kaplan, this won't go away after quarantine is over. To prepare your child, discuss how to join a group conversation by creating different scenarios. If your child has been a mostly silent participant in group chats or activities, you can review their chat together and discuss where they could jump in and what they could say.

Remember to have patience

Right now, your capacity to guide your child may be limited— and that's okay! Do what makes sense for you and your family during these stressful times. Remember that your support is valuable and that even small successes are meaningful. Be patient with your child – this is hard for them, too. Always prioritize keeping your relationship positive, and know that any effort you make will benefit your child, even when social distancing is a thing of the past.



Author: Gia Miller

Source: <https://childmind.org/article/coping-with-social-anxiety-during-social-distancing/>



APPLE NACHOS

INGREDIENTS

Sliced Apples

Caramel

Mini Chocolate Chips

White Chocolate

Any other additional toppings you
may want.

DIRECTIONS

Prepare all toppings by placing
mini chips in a bowl, and melting the white
chocolate and caramel in the
microwave.

Slice your apples and arrange them
onto the plate or serving dish.

Drizzle on the caramel and white
chocolate covering all of the apples.

Sprinkle on the mini chocolate
chips and any other toppings you choose to
add and enjoy!



STRAWBERRY PRETZEL PIE

step by step
directions
on the following page

Ingredients:

- 4 cups miniature pretzels
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup boiling water
- 1 package (6 ounces) strawberry gelatin
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 pound fresh strawberries, divided
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream, divided
- 1 jar (7 ounces) marshmallow creme
- 2/3 cup whipped cream cheese
- 2/3 cup sweetened condensed milk

Strawberry Pretzel Pie

1. Place pretzels in a food processor; pulse until chopped. Add butter and sugar; pulse until combined. Reserve 1/3 cup pretzel mixture for topping. Press remaining mixture onto bottom of a greased 9-in. spring-form pan. Refrigerate 30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, in a bowl, add boiling water to gelatin; stir 2 minutes to completely dissolve. Stir in lemon juice. Refrigerate 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.



3. Chop half the strawberries; hull the remaining berries and reserve for topping. In a large bowl, beat 1 cup heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Beat marshmallow cream, cream cheese and sweetened condensed milk into cooled gelatin mixture until blended. Gently fold in chopped strawberries and whipped cream. Pour into crust.
4. Refrigerate, covered, until firm, 4-6 hours. Beat remaining 1 cup heavy cream until stiff peaks form; spread over pie. Top with reserved strawberries and pretzel mixture.

This cool no-bake strawberry pretzel pie is the perfect antidote for your sweet tooth this summer. Made with pantry staples, and well, as easy as pie to make.

A close-up photograph of a ring constructed from numerous Pringles potato chips. The chips are stacked and woven together to form a continuous, circular structure. The ring is set against a dark, textured wooden background. The text "PRINGLES RING STEM CHALLENGE" is overlaid in the center of the ring in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

PRINGLES RING STEM CHALLENGE

The Pringles Ringle is an engineering challenge in which students create a ring using only Pringles chips, no tape or glue allowed! The challenge requires a lot of patience as well as careful and precise chip placement. Although, the hardest part of the challenge is not eating all of the chips before finishing the ring.

Read ahead for activity directions!

PRINGLES RING STEM CHALLENGE

Materials:

1 can of Pringles
Recording Sheet (optional)

In order to create the ring, children should only use complete chips. Any chips that are broken can be eaten or disposed of. Using complete chips will ensure that the ring is as strong as possible.

Challenge Tips:

Before the challenge have kids plan out their chip ring design. Depending on their ages, you may also want to ask some of the following questions in order to help them process through the challenge:

- How will the base of your ring be able to support the top?
- Will you layer your chips in a certain pattern? If so, what pattern?
- What other strategies will you try if your first design doesn't work as planned?

The Physics Behind the Challenge:

How does the Pringles Ring work?

As the sides of the ring get taller, gravity pushes down on the chips causing them to slide down. In order for the chips to not slide, there must be enough frictional force on the sides of the chips so that gravity can't push it down.



Summer Bucket List

Creative, fun ideas for summertime fun!

- ☐ Make your own kite and fly it on a windy day
- ☐ Create a neighborhood treasure hunt
- ☐ Take a hike at a local park
- ☐ Roast marshmallows and make s'mores
- ☐ Camp in the backyard or build a pillow fort
- ☐ Stay up late stargazing
- ☐ Draw with an art mural with sidewalk chalk
- ☐ Have a bubble blowing contest
- ☐ Write a story and illustrate it
- ☐ Read 10 or more books
- ☐ Have a picnic at a park
- ☐ Paint rocks and place them in your garden
- ☐ Run through the sprinkler



Summer Bucket List

Creative, fun ideas for summertime fun!

- ☐ Send a letter to a family member
- ☐ Build a bird house
- ☐ Host a Family Movie Night in the backyard
- ☐ Look for animal shapes in the clouds
- ☐ Dance in the rain
- ☐ Go to an outdoor concert
- ☐ Make a noodle necklace
- ☐ Play hopscotch or I-Spy
- ☐ DIY homemade popsicles
- ☐ Have Family Board Game Nights
- ☐ Make your own Slip and Slide
- ☐ Create a backyard obstacle course
- ☐ Plant a vegetable garden
- ☐ Explore a new nature trail
- ☐ Have a car wash for your parents
- ☐ Go on a road trip
- ☐ Create your own personal Bucket List



MY END of SCHOOL YEAR Interview



Big Life Journal

My name _____

I am " " years old

Favorite color

Favorite song

Favorite animal

Favorite subject

What did you practice
and get better at this year?

What new skills or talents did you
develop this year?

What was your proudest moment
this year?

What will you remember most about this school year?



Additional Learning Resources

STEM ACTIVITIES TO HELP EXPLAIN HOW VIRUSES ARE TRANSMITTED:

[HTTPS://WWW.EXPLORATORIUM.EDU/LEARN](https://www.exploratorium.edu/learn)

**THIS COOL, INTERACTIVE SITE LETS KIDS
BROWSE THE MUSEUM COLLECTION BY TIME
PERIOD, NOT BY ROOM, SO KIDS CAN FOCUS
IN ON THE ERA THEY'RE MOST INTERESTED IN:**

[HTTPS://BRITISHMUSEUM.WITHGOOGLE.COM/](https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/)

**A FARM GROWER IN IRVINGTON, NY SHOWS
KIDS HOW FOOD GOES FROM THE FIELD (IN
THIS CASE, AN INDOOR GROWER) TO THE
GROCERY STORE. THERE'S EVEN A QUIZ AT
THE END!:**

[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/410603232?
UTM_CAMPAIGN=5370367&UTM_SOURCE=AFFILIATE&
UTM_CHANNEL=AFFILIATE&CJEVENT=1088684DA7401
1EA80B002850A24060C](https://vimeo.com/410603232?utm_campaign=5370367&utm_source=affiliate&utm_channel=affiliate&cjevent=1088684da74011ea80b002850a24060c)

**TAKE A LOOK INSIDE GEORGE
WASHINGTON'S HOME THE SAME WAY YOU
WOULD CLICK THROUGH STREET VIEW ON A
GOOGLE MAP:**

[HTTPS://VIRTUALTOUR.MOUNTVERNON.ORG/](https://virtualtour.mountvernon.org/)