



## Coronavirus Q&A: Helping our teenage and young adult PDAers understand and abide by lockdown rules

- Always start with **empathy** and validate your teen/young adult's feelings. Find out **why** they want to go out – and remember that it's normal during teenage years to have strong relationships with friends and to distance from parents, so the lockdown is even more confining for teens than it is for adults or younger children. Then ask about how you can support them and see if you can work on an agreed plan **collaboratively**.
- Try to **shift the emphasis** away from 'blind compliance' to assessing the situation objectively and then determining for yourself what the right course of action is based on what is logical or 'morally' right or based on a good reason that makes specific sense to each individual.
- This could make a great **joint research project**, with the parent acknowledging some ignorance, for example saying 'I'm actually not sure exactly why we shouldn't be going out, perhaps you could help me out?' and going on a journey together to find out why it's the right course of action based on your own independent research.
- Some teens may genuinely not see how their actions may impact others – these videos may be helpful to share:

<https://www.facebook.com/DHSCgovuk/videos/986961355031791/?t=7>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=910760832690792>

<https://www.facebook.com/OHdeptofhealth/videos/529590267702154/?t=0>

If your PDAer is a young adult they'll be making their own decisions, but you can still help them to think through the possible outcomes which they may not be able to foresee.

- Explore **different ways of communicating** - verbal communication can involve a lot of emotion and doesn't give much time to process the incoming messages and formulate a reply. It could just make teens turn off (or even react aggressively). Maybe texting, emailing, putting notes under their door or just leaving information around for them to find and read themselves (without it being obviously directed at them). And then try not to pressure them for a reply – just leave them to mull on it.
- Is there **another person who they would listen to and trust** – an older sibling they look up to, or a friend who may be taking social distancing very seriously and may be more successful and persuasive in helping your teen to see a different viewpoint?
- There may be an element of **peer-pressure** - could you help your young person to think of (and maybe practice during a role play?) ways to say no without 'losing face' with their friends?
- Given that social media is the main means we can all keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues at the moment, now may be the time to **relax rules around screens** for the time being.

- If teens/young adults are missing their boy/girlfriends then as well as keeping in touch via social media, could you help them to come up with **other ways to show they care** (handwritten letters or cards left in known places) and to focus on plans for when restrictions are lifted?
- You may be concerned about contact with the **police** – it may be worth seeing if your young person would consider carrying an autism or PDA alert card (links below)? Some areas have local schemes, so it may be worth looking into that. Or even proactively contacting your local station and letting them know that your child is autistic so that they can take this into account during any encounters.

[National Autistic Society cards](#)

[PDA Society cards](#)

Example of [local police autism alert cards](#)

- It is also worth being aware of the **government guidelines** [here](#) which state

“You can leave your home for medical need. If you (or a person in your care) have a specific health condition that requires you to leave the home to maintain your health - including if that involves travel beyond your local area - then you can do so. This could, for example, include where individuals with learning disabilities or autism require specific exercise in an open space two or three times each day - ideally in line with a care plan agreed with a medical professional.

Even in such cases, in order to reduce the spread of infection and protect those exercising, travel outside of the home should be limited, as close to your local area as possible, and you should remain at least 2 metres apart from anyone who is not a member of your household or a carer at all times.”

- Or you could just try this ... (joke ☺) ...

**What part of "STAY AT HOME"  
did you not understand?**

