



## Coronavirus Q&A: Managing video calls & transition tips

We're all learning as we go along about screen time and technology during the coronavirus outbreak, so there's no one right or wrong approach, it's about finding what works for each child. It's a wonderful way to keep connected whilst we're socially distancing/self-isolating, but it can also be tricky to find a helpful balance.

It might be worth thinking of turning this situation around to 'what can my child learn from these social interactions'? And then working together to help make them into a positive learning experience. Think about and talk with your child about the new skills they're learning, e.g. initiating a conversation, multitasking, listening with eyes and brain, and problem solving. Learning life skills around how to make these online interactions more manageable will be more helpful than imposing limits or conditions.

Working together with your child proactively and collaboratively will be important. Always start with empathy and help your child to see that it's OK to be struggling with these things and that together you can work out a way to make it more manageable. Maybe remind your child of a time when they handled a stressful situation well and say 'I liked the way you handled that ... is there something there that you could use when you're meeting your friends online?'

Hopefully some of these ideas may be helpful:

- Consider having less participants in each meeting?
- Perhaps try multiple shorter meetings at different times in the day – this can also provide some structure to the day which may be helpful.
- Is sensory overload causing anxiety? If so switch off audio/video for some of the time and try earphones so that other competing noises don't add to the overload
- Check out the software and see what options there may be in terms of screen layout (e.g. switching to whoever is speaking or gallery view may be less overwhelming).
- Try to help your child recognise early signs of feeling overwhelmed and give them a 'code word' to use as an exit strategy – maybe discuss this with other parents so that they understand why some of these interactions may be tricky for your child and so that they can help their children understand too.
- Similarly offering a drink or a snack could be an opportunity to 'tune out' for a while and help your child to self-regulate.
- Having some clarity around when the meet-up will finish and when the next one will be may also help in managing anxiety.
- Explore options for your child to be the meeting host so that they're in control of who joins and how long the session lasts.
- Think about timing – schedule social meeting meet-ups for when your child has the greatest amount of capacity to cope with what can be a slightly chaotic or overwhelming experience.

On a more general note about gaming – it's helpful for parents to 'reframe' how they approach the issue and think about why gaming holds such an appeal for our children (this is often because it's an environment where they feel both safe and in control in way that they may not do in 'normal' life).

When it comes to transitioning away from gaming or social media meet ups, it works well to have almost equally appealing plans B/C/D on hand, so it's like a 'step down' from gaming rather than a 'drop down'. Likewise having these activities or distractions on hand can be helpful in managing frustration and anxiety if games glitch or there are connectivity problems with social media chats. Having pages open behind the zoom chat with something interesting to immediately switch attention to (e.g. one of the many virtual zoo or museum tours or something that relates to your child's special interests) can be a useful fall-back, either if there's a glitch or if your child just needs to 'tune out' for a bit. Likewise having stim toys or another device to hand can help.