

# THREE WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN ADJUST TO SOCIAL DISTANCING

Jennifer Jipson, Educational Advisory Board, The Goddard School®  
Professor of Child Development at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo



Social distancing is an incredibly effective way to keep you and your children safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. But for children who love to be social, this method of prevention may be challenging to understand and even more challenging to practice.

According to [Educational Advisory Board](#) member Jen Jipson, Ph.D., “The good news is that children are resilient and can thrive even in an environment of extended social distancing if their family environment supports their developmental needs.” Luckily, the advent of video conferencing technology can do wonders to create a positive, warm and responsive environment that prioritizes children’s comfort as they adapt to this new experience of social distancing. Here are three ways to use that technology to help children adjust.

## **SCHEDULE REGULAR VIDEO CALLS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS.**



This applies to grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and any other family members that you can think of. Perfect for children of all ages, babies included, video chatting is an excellent way for your child to connect with family while interacting with people from various age groups.

## **GET CREATIVE WITH [VIRTUAL PLAYDATES](#).**



“Recently,” Dr. Jipson said, “my daughter and her friend played a word game where they picked out a matched set of the same letters. Then they both tried to make words from their letters and compared their different solutions [through video chat].” Your children could also share their art creations with their friends or participate in a scavenger hunt where each child has to look for the same items around the house. According to Jipson, activities like these will increase opportunities for communication, collaboration, conflict negotiation and self-regulation.



## **DON'T FORCE IT.**

Some children may not be comfortable with video chatting, and that is perfectly fine. “Follow their lead,” Jipson said, “and when appropriate, take small steps toward helping them find ways to enjoy engaging with their peers over screens.” For example, one parent could read a familiar story to both children who can see each other but are not pressured to interact. With time, any inhibition related to screen-based interactions may wear off, and the children may begin to engage with each other more spontaneously.

Of course, the best way to help children adjust to social distancing is to spend as much time as you can with them, either one-on-one or as a family. Even though this can be challenging when balancing work and childcare full time at home, spending a few minutes here and there with your child throughout the day can go a long way to lessen the impact of social distancing.

**NOTE** - *Before allowing your child to use your mobile device, be sure to turn off notifications and lock the screen by selecting Screen Pinning on Androids or Guided Access on iPhones so that your child's experience isn't interrupted by accidental swiping or button pressing. Also, be sure to sterilize the device before and after your child uses it.*

