

Friendship and relationship issues during the COVID-19 outbreak

Generally, a strong friendship is one where you can 'pick up where you left off' and can weather many a storm. Some might say that for many young people, changing from meeting face to face to online communication is much easier than for adults. However fun a virtual house party might be though, it still might be an adjustment going from seeing friends every day at school, college or university to seeing friends online. Without regular and close contact, it's not uncommon for friendships to fade. Lack of regular contact, disagreements and falling out all create gaps which are harder to patch online.

To keep close connections close online:

- Discuss what you both need. For example, it might be important for you that your friend asks about how you are getting on with your family whilst it might be important for your friend that you remember to contact them regularly.
- Set some 'rules' on how you will keep in contact – regularity, length of time, what form of contact.
- Share what's happening in your life, but watch out for over sharing! You want to develop a closeness without it becoming too one-sided.
- Be kind when talking between friends. Information can get distorted as it gets shared down the line and written words can't be erased.
- It's even more important to show your friends that you miss them and think about them. Sending them an extra message or mentioning you wished you could have met as you usually do after school could make all the difference.
- Remind your friend how much you value them. Give them examples of what you appreciate.
- Make plans for the future – it shows you both you are in it for the long haul.
- Be there when it matters.



If you feel you are becoming distant from a friend or have fallen out:

- Talk to them about what you have noticed – it's awkward but may help clear up things.
- Be open to seeing things from their perspective even if you feel you are in the right. This means listening to them.
- Be honest about the fact you may have hurt them, even if it was unintentional. Be prepared to apologise.
- Be prepared to put in extra effort to repair the friendship unless you want the relationship to fade.
- Try not to play games in terms of waiting for your friend to make the first move for example. Take control of making you get the outcome you would like to have.
- Be prepared to accept the fact that people can change. Sometimes people grow apart through no one's fault. If this is the case, feel sad about the ending but accept it recognising that you both are on different paths.

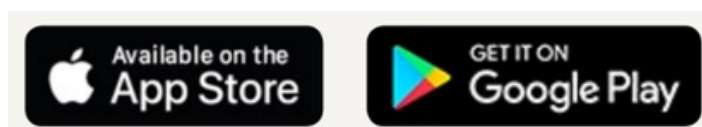


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