

Social Anxiety Exposures While Physical Distancing

Countries around the world are issuing stay-at-home and social distancing orders to combat the spread of COVID-19. This creates a unique challenge for clinicians who still need to conduct social anxiety exposures for their clients. The University of Virginia's Program for Anxiety, Cognition, and Treatment Lab has compiled some suggestions for virtual social interactions that adhere to physical distancing rules. We have organized them by prominent social threat domains.

*Edits in red are from Texas Children's and geared more towards school-aged children.

General Telehealth Tips for Social Anxiety Exposures

- Direct children to do exposures in the moment.

Fear of...

Talking to strangers

- Order food delivery from a local restaurant over the phone.
- Join a video call with unfamiliar adults (e.g., parents' friends).
- Ask questions via video call to adults (e.g., siblings' teachers).
- Chat via video games (e.g., Minecraft).
- Join a virtual book club (e.g., <https://quarantinebookclub.com/>).
- Text or video chat with strangers via Omegle (<https://omegle.com/>).
- Meet a new friend with "BFF" mode on the app Bumble.
- Join a new Facebook group, and message a member of that group.
- Text your "number neighbor," the phone number 1 more or 1 less than yours.

Being the center of attention

- Complete a Just Dance video in front of the therapist or other family members.
- Speak up during remote classes, ask questions.
- Send in video recordings to others (e.g., dance teacher, therapist, extended family) and ask for feedback.
- Participate in Tik Tok dance challenges.
- Take pictures of yourself with funny filters.
- Do a silly virtual background in Zoom; wear silly props.
- Record video of self and post onto YouTube, or via Marco Polo.
- Do a performance (e.g., play musical instrument) in your yard where people are walking by.
- Wear something silly while going on a walk.
- Give tour of child's home or room (to therapist, others).
- Join a virtual dance party (<https://time.com/5809569/dj-dance-party-coronavirus/>).
- Find and participate in an online workout class.
- Speak up during a virtual meeting or class.
- Raise a thought-provoking question on social media.

- Join in on a social media challenge
(<https://nytimes.com/2020/03/26/style/viral-challenges-coronavirus.html>).

Making mistakes

- Make typo in school assignment or text message.
- Wear shirt backwards, only wear one earring, etc.
- Next time you write an email, intentionally include a typo.
- Make a social media post that has a typo.

Talking to potential romantic partners/classmates in general

- Set up video chat with friend or classmates.
- Send messages to friends/classmates (can make hierarchy of friends).
- Message with a match on a dating app (e.g., Tinder, Bumble Date, Hinge).
- Set up a video date with a match.

Talking to authority figures

- Have an individual video call with a teacher; ask teachers for help.
- Ask for help with homework.
- Call your local congressperson.
- Ask a question to a prominent person doing a Reddit AMA
(<https://reddit.com/r/AMA/>).
- Text a celebrity who has a phone number included through the platform Community
(<https://nytimes.com/2019/10/15/style/celebrity-phone-numbers.html>).

General social situations

- Use Netflix party extension; or use FaceTime while watching a movie.
- Use FaceTime, Zoom, WhatsApp to communicate with classmates or friends.
- Set up study dates.
- Schedule a call or video chat (e.g., Facetime, Zoom, Houseparty) with an acquaintance.
- Watch a movie with a friend via the Netflix Party extension on the Google Chrome web browser.