# Has Isolation During The Pandemic Impacted Our Kids & Their Social Skills?

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Man is a social being. Humans are inherently social creatures and are unable to develop to their full potential without interacting with one other. Especially during one’s childhood, social lives take on a higher significance in their development. Family and school play an important role in the enhancement of social skills. These skills need ongoing refinement as kids get older. It's not that your child has it or does not have it but can be learnt and practiced.

**Peer interactions and relationships are how kids learn about cooperation, trust, loyalty, sharing, listening, following directions, respecting personal space, using manners and also about themselves - understanding and expressing their own emotions, making decisions, coping with challenges and accepting responsibility. These traits help individuals to make good choices in thinking and behaviour, resulting in social competence.**

During periods of social development, when a child is deprived of the opportunity to build these skills, it can potentially delay their socio-emotional growth. The ongoing pandemic and [lockdown have impacted the development of social skills at every stage.](https://www.kidsstoppress.com/details/are-doing-pre-schoolers-asks-zarna-doshi/19691)

Babies born during the lockdown have not interacted with the outside world. They have a small world consisting of their immediate family members. A 9-month-old baby started to cry when she stepped out for the first time and saw people around her.

The current scenario has led to social isolation, which is the absence of social contact and can lead to loneliness. Loneliness is a state of being cut off from normal social networks.

**Children need to interact with peers of their age and parents and other members can never fill that void completely. There have been studies that have demonstrated that a lack of social relationships negatively impacts the development of the brain's structure.**

Social isolation can be linked with adverse health consequences including depression, anxiety, poor sleep quality, impaired executive function and accelerated cognitive decline.

Social Distancing for a few months does not have a huge impact on kids since children are the most adaptable. My 10- year old niece met her friends after a long time but refused to give them a hug and told them to maintain social distance. That’s how adaptable and understanding kids are. Although, the possibility of more extended periods of isolation may pose risk for younger and older children.

**Effects of Social Isolation on Different Age Groups**

Socialization is very important for children, and this process begins at home with family and continues at school. They are taught what will be expected of them as they mature and become members of society.

**Preschool**

Preschool is often the [foundation for social development](https://www.verywellmind.com/social-and-emotional-development-in-early-childhood-2795106), especially since it is the first opportunity for children to learn how to interact with their .peers. Parents think that children play just to pass their time. But, playing inculcates important skills in children. Without the opportunity to build that foundation, [children may find it harder to learn social skills](https://www.kidsstoppress.com/details/gross-motor-skill-development-in-children-what-you-must-know/19701) such as peer interactions, sharing, problem-solving, and behavioural expectations.

**Grade School**

During the elementary years, kids become more independent and begin to understand the relationship between actions and consequences. They are still refining their social skills, which typically develop during peer interactions at school. Since this is not happening right now, children are spending more time on screen and playing games on the screen.

**Teens**

While they are old enough to comprehend the consequences of their actions and the impact of isolation, they need social interaction to mature.

Teens consider social events, such as cultural events, sports, school trips as a reflection of their sense of self, and when these are not available, they may struggle to adjust to a different type of social life. A lot of teens are facing anxiety issues and loneliness.

It is even more difficult for children who are stuck at home in disturbed families. They are unable to express themselves and talk about their feelings with others or move out of their homes even for a temporary period. They would have ideally spent this time at school and college and vented.

**Tips and Strategies for Parents**

Children and adolescents are far better at accepting change than adults. Parents play an important role in the emotional development of children. During times like these, they should create a comfortable environment where children can speak openly about their fears, frustration or anything that is bothering them.

It is rightly said, **‘Social Distancing does not mean Emotional Distancing’.**

Parents can arrange regular calls, video calls with friends and cousins, spend time together by playing games or taking kids for a walk with them. Children learn through imitation. Hence, it's important that parents manage their anxiety, frustration levels and approach towards the whole situation accordingly.

Kids should take frequent breaks, talk to other members of the family or friends about their concerns and display effective ways to cope with the situation. If you see any sudden changes in the child’s temperament or behaviour, it is advisable to seek professional help from a psychologist.