**How to Give Your Kids Social Time While Social Distancing**

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School is more than just learning the subject areas; it is also a time for students to develop and practice their social skills with peers. Being away from school may mean that students will miss that important interaction. Below are some creative ways to be social, while social distancing, by using technology. Each of these options can be done using a variety of platforms such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, etc.

1. **Virtual lunch playdate:** When your child is eating lunch, have them enjoy lunch with a friend or family member who is close or far away. For kids who are old enough, have them help prepare their lunch with a fruit and veggie choice.
2. **Virtual sports practice**: Practice soccer, Karate, basketball, dance, etc. over the platform of your choice. Or, for a non-virtual option, kids can practice “with” next-door neighbours outside at the same time while everyone stays in their own yards.
3. **Virtual board game:** Try chess/checkers with a friend or family member who is far away. Both parties will need to have the game. Set it up and play. Tell your partner where to move their piece on their board.
4. **Virtual reality play date:** If both kids have virtual reality headsets, they can explore zoos, museums, or even space together!
5. **Virtual dance party**: Put some music on and let the kids go crazy. This will not only give them social time but get them up and moving for that 60 minutes of suggested activity time a day. If the weather is nice, do this in the back yard or other green space.
6. **Virtual book reading**: Invite a special loved one to join you on a digital platform to read a book. Kids who are old enough can do the reading. Younger kids can be read to.
7. **Virtual band or orchestra:**Invite a friend, classmate, or community member to practice music on a digital platform. This could involve the same or a different instrument.
8. **Virtual karaoke:**Each person takes a turn choosing a song. There are many free music apps that are age-appropriate to choose from. Sing away together.
9. **Virtual distance learning:**Many schools are assigning e-learning for students. Why not work on it during a set time with a friend? Schedule in a snack time and outside time to break it up.
10. **Pen Pal**: Go the old-fashioned route and write letters to mail back and forth to each other (this can be with a friend or family member). You could incorporate some art into this as kids can write their letter on a blank card and create a picture on the front.

Social interaction is an important part of both mental and physical well-being. These are just a few of the ways you can help your children connect with the friends and loved ones they may be missing.