

Communicating Your Needs While Social Distancing

The Issue	Passive responses & behaviors	Aggressive responses & behaviors	Assertive responses & behaviors	Tips
You need time alone to do your school work and personal tasks, but your family keeps interrupting. (i.e., family asking for things or bothering you when you're trying to do your work).	<p>"No, I'm not too busy."</p> <p>"Sure, I have time."</p> <p>Not saying anything, even if you're visibly annoyed.</p>	<p>"You always bother me. Leave me alone!"</p> <p>Slamming the door</p> <p>Yelling or using insults</p>	<p>"I need some time alone to myself."</p> <p>"I will be focusing on school work at this time... Please do not come in unless it is an emergency."</p>	<p>Be clear and direct about your need for time.</p> <p>Post a schedule for others to see.</p> <p>Remind your family ahead of time when you'll be busy.</p>
You need your loved ones to understand that you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed during this difficult time.	<p>"I'm fine."</p> <p>"It's not a big deal."</p> <p>Avoiding interactions with others.</p>	<p>"You will never understand!"</p> <p>Lashing out when asked how you feel.</p>	<p>"I'm having a difficult time and need support."</p> <p>"It would really help if you..."</p> <p>"My feelings are valid."</p>	<p>Take time to reflect, and be honest with yourself about what you're feeling.</p> <p>Be open and honest with the people around you.</p>
School has shifted to an online platform, and the transition is negatively impacting your learning and productivity.	<p>"I just need to figure it out myself."</p> <p>Just dealing with it and not saying anything.</p> <p>Withdrawing from school work and tasks.</p>	<p>"Stop giving us so much work!"</p> <p>"You just don't get it!"</p> <p>Disrupting others' learning.</p>	<p>"I need help with..."</p> <p>"This work-load is a bit overwhelming and I need some extra time."</p> <p>"I'm still adjusting to this new normal and need help."</p>	<p>Talk to your teacher directly and express your needs.</p> <p>Ask others how they are managing these changes to see what might work for you.</p>
Loved ones are misinformed or under-informed about the impact of COVID and you don't feel safe.	<p>"I don't know if that's right."</p> <p>"I think I might have read something different."</p> <p>Not saying anything.</p>	<p>"Do you even watch the news!?"</p> <p>"I can't believe you think that!"</p> <p>Criticizing people's choices</p>	<p>"That is a common misconception, here's the accurate information."</p> <p>"Here are ways we should be protecting ourselves..."</p>	<p>Practice patience and empathy.</p> <p>Review accurate information together.</p> <p>Express concerns you have about how they're handling things, openly and without judgment.</p>
Friends are not prioritizing social distancing and want to hang out, but you know it isn't safe.	<p>"Idk if we should"</p> <p>"Are you sure about this?"</p> <p>Avoiding texts, direct messages, and calls.</p>	<p>"You're so stupid!"</p> <p>"I'm obviously not going out, stop asking!"</p>	<p>"That's not a good idea, we have to help keep each other and our community safe."</p> <p>"We should stay home and make plans for once this is over. For now, let's have a Netflix party instead!"</p>	<p>Reiterate the severity of this time and how important it is to take things seriously.</p> <p>Find alternative virtual activities you can do instead.</p>

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Things to Remember:

- Make the decisions that are right for you, and decide to communicate assertively.
- Practice assertiveness, such as how you will say “no” or otherwise express your needs assertively.
- Understand power dynamics and how they may influence your interactions (Parent-child; Teacher-Student; Peer-Peer)
- Think about what the other person might be thinking/feeling, and listen actively to what they say.
- Use “I” statements (“I think” and “I feel”) rather than “you” statements (you always, you never).
- Assertive communication can be practiced in-person and virtually (e.g., text, email, face-to-face)