

Lockdown and social distancing have meant we've had to make changes to how we can interact right now; this is particularly true when it comes to relationships and dating. Messaging, sending photos or live video chats can be a great way of keeping in touch, and help make us feel better if we're missing a boyfriend/girlfriend/intimate partner.

Safe and respectful contact online

If we're in contact online, it's important to consider the law, privacy, and to make sure everyone is on-board - **consent is key!** Consent, simply, means agreeing to do something, by choice, and having the freedom and ability to make that choice.

When you're with someone in person, you can communicate consent with your actions, sounds, or the words and body language you use. If you're talking to a boyfriend/girlfriend/intimate partner online, you can still use some of the communication skills that you would use in real life by:

- Making sure that you listen to each other so that you understand each other's boundaries
- Respecting and sticking to what each other feel comfortable with
- Asking permission before sending pictures, videos or comments



Things to bear in mind:

- Sending or receiving a nude when you're under 18 is against the law
- Asking someone under 18 for a nude is against the law
- It's also against the law to have a naked picture on your phone, even if it's of yourself, as this is classed as an Indecent Image of a Child
- It's never ok to put pressure on someone to do something they're uncomfortable with
- Sharing private or sexual materials without a person's consent, with the intent of causing distress (known as "revenge porn") is now classed as a sexual offence
- These laws exist to protect young people, not criminalise them. If you're worried or upset, please speak to someone.

Being "together apart"

If you're apart, why not try an online date? You could:

- ♥ watch a film together with a Netflix party
- ♥ do a workout together
- ♥ do an online escape room or quiz
- ♥ try gaming together
- ♥ make a playlist for each other
- ♥ try online card games or classic games such as 'Would you rather...?'

Doing something different from just talking online can be really fun and can help you feel more involved in each other's lives while you're apart.

What if a friendship or relationship ends during lockdown?

Being apart, and the worries and concerns that come with living in such an uncertain time, may make us feel more anxious and emotional than normal. You might find it difficult not being able to make up in person if you've had a fight, or you may be worried about whether they're still interested in the relationship. Relationships may come to an end if issues such as jealousy or a break down of trust become too much; at the best of times, it can be difficult to maintain a long-distance relationship, let alone with the added stress and challenges of a pandemic.

Difficulties in relationships are always hard to deal with. It might feel even worse if you are isolated at home and unable to see friends or family, or go out and do things that would normally make you feel better. Although it may be difficult to see it right now, it's important to remember that the stress and the way we are living at the minute won't last forever.

If your relationship does come to an end, remember that you loved and respected each other once. Try



to be considerate of each other and the people around you; although it can be tempting, try not to bad-mouth each other to friends or on social media. And bear in mind that what you might normally expect during a break-up might not be the same right now. It might be good to talk about whether you will stay in touch or if you need space.

You might find it helpful to talk to family and friends online or on the phone, find activities at home that you enjoy, or get out for a walk or some exercise. If you would like to access further support, have a look at [Kooth](#), [Relate](#) or some of the sources below.

Over to you....

1. Think about: why is it important to make sure we are behaving respectfully and safely in our relationships online?
2. Can you list **four features** of what you think is a healthy and positive relationship?
3. What might be some of the challenges to relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Support and Information:

[Be Aware b4 You Share - Revenge Porn: The Facts](#)

[Brook - Sexting & Selfies](#)

[Childline - Sexting](#)

[Childline—Relationships](#)

[Childline—Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships](#)

[Diverse](#)