

Parent's perspective

Another worry as a mother of a teen nowadays is the increased screen time. School classes, mathematics tuition, and then those weird online games, PUBG, Call of Duty, and Minecraft....Three I can recall immediately.

The other day my son and his friends were in a zoom meeting and doing their homework.

It seemed weird but upon inquiry, I was told that they were just 'Buddying Up' (as they call it)." Like in school, we used to sit together, chit chat and do our homework, so same over Zoom." was his instant reply. Coming out of his room, two opposite thoughts ran through my mind. One, there was no need to increase your screen time (which already worries me) and second, the felt need of children to be with their peers. The second thought overpowered me, and I felt that social isolation because of COVID did not allow children to be with their friends. You indeed need someone of your age group to talk, discuss and share your ideas or worries. Maybe as a mother, I was not interacting with him enough because of my schedule....ufff...another concern added to my list while I un mindfully muttered it loud enough for my son to overhear.

"No, it's not because you are not giving me enough time... it's just that I want to be with my friends. I miss my school, my playground, and my 'buddying' time

with my schoolmates," he said. A bit relieved, but it's a fact that social isolation is an issue that needs to be addressed. My sister resonated with my worries. My 4-year-old nephew, who was to start his nursery, could not attend his classes physically. He does not even know what it is to be going to school. For him, school is his laptop, and the teacher is someone who is politely directing him to learn and write, and classmates are those visible in small boxes in the Zoom room. Safety reasons bound children to their homes, glued them to their screens and the small 14-inch screen became their new world.

How long will it be like this? When would the school again be full of noisy classes, and the park in my locality with chirpy kids fighting for their turn on the swings?

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