

Why you should consider joining a virtual community

What is a virtual community?

Virtual communities have been defined as a group of people who come together through similar interests or goals, where communication via electronic media is the primary form of interaction.^[1]

Why are virtual communities important?

Teenagers are in the pursuit of autonomy and independence from their parents, and being shifted into an environment (as a result of the pandemic) which is restricting can feel suffocating. Furthermore, despite possibly making adolescents closer to their families, there still was a drastic cut off in the amount of time they could spend with their peers.^[2]

The adolescent period comes with a heightened sensitivity to social contexts,^[3] which makes it essential for them to be exposed to social interactions. This is where virtual communities come in. Some of the ways that virtual communities help out are:

- Countering isolation^[4]
- Countering depression^[5]
- They provide a space for discussions about topics that are usually considered 'not alright' to talk about.^[1] This space can make people feel accepted and seen, especially when they are from marginalised communities such as LGBTQ.
- Providing resources such as material to help out with any issue you might be going through. For example, a guide on how to deal with ADHD.^[6]

How do you get into virtual communities?

- Search up key terms of your interests on social media and the internet overall.
- Ask your friends and family what virtual communities they are a part of.
- Visit various pages that you like and check if they have a virtual community which you can join. On Instagram, Google and Facebook pages, they sometimes link servers which you can join up with.
- Check out internet forums like Reddit and Discord for your subject of interest.