

COVID-19 – Teenage Mental Health

Being a teenager is difficult no matter what, and the coronavirus disease is making it even harder. With schools closed and events cancelled, many teens are missing out on some of the biggest moments of their young lives — as well as everyday moments like socialising with friends and participating in class. To help support Teen mental health during COVID-19, UNICEF has consulted with a leading Psychologist to provide some helpful tips:

1. Recognise that your anxiety is completely normal

Psychologists have long recognised that anxiety is a normal and healthy function that alerts us to threats and helps us take measures to protect ourselves. While anxiety around COVID-19 is completely understandable, make sure that you are using reliable sources to get information.

2. Create distractions

What psychologists know is that when we are under chronically difficult conditions, it's very helpful to divide the problem into two categories: things I can do something about, and then things I can do nothing about. There is a lot that falls under that second category right now, and that's okay, but one thing that helps us to deal with that is creating distractions for ourselves. Tasks such as doing homework, watching a favourite movie or getting in bed with a novel are all ways to seek relief and find balance in the day-to-day.

3. Find new ways to connect with your friends

If you want to spend time with friends while you're social distancing, social media is a great way to connect. It is important though to manage screen time in younger people, so it may be appropriate for a parent or carer to set boundaries here.

4. Focus on you

Have you been wanting to learn how to do something new, start a new book or spend time practicing a musical instrument? Now is the time to do that. Focusing on yourself and finding ways to use your new-found time is a productive way to look after your mental health.

5. Feel your feelings

Missing out on events with friends, hobbies, or sports matches is incredibly disappointing. The best way to deal with this disappointment? Let yourself feel it. Processing your feelings looks different for everyone. What's important is that you do what feels right to you.

6. Be kind to yourself and others

Some teens are facing bullying and abuse at school due to coronavirus. If you witness someone being bullied, reach out to them and try to offer support. Doing nothing can leave the person feeling that everyone is against them or that nobody cares. Your words can make a difference. Remember: now more than ever we need to be thoughtful about what we share or say that may hurt others.

If you are over the age of 18, or over 16 and out of full time education, or if you are a parent and feel you may need some advice to support teens, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

If you would like to view the Webinar on **'Teenage Mental Health'** this is being delivered live on **Friday 3rd July at 11am**, please use the below link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1425763523826802703>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.