



SELF-CARE TIPS FOR TEENS

DURING COVID-19



Mental Health FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

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TIPS TO HELP TEENS COPE DURING COVID-19

Self-care is vital to protecting your mental health and well-being during stressful situations. We encourage you to take a few minutes during your day to be the difference for the teens in your life with these tips from Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). Here are a few ways they can care for themselves — and you can care for yourself.



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TIPS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND COPING:

- ❑ **Maintain a daily routine** with consistent sleep, activity and study patterns.
- ❑ **Stay connected** to others and try to find moments of gratitude.
- ❑ **Talk to people** you feel comfortable with about your feelings or worries, then give yourself permission to stop worrying.
- ❑ **Eat breakfast every morning.** If possible, maintain a healthy diet with fruits and vegetables, and eat meals at regular times throughout the day.
- ❑ **Limit coffee or energy drinks;** they will increase feelings of anxiety and make it difficult to relax.
- ❑ **Look for patterns** or be aware of situations that make you feel particularly worried or anxious. When you're in these situations, try relaxation or distraction techniques or ask a family member or friend to help.
- ❑ **Relieve times of high anxiety** with exercise or physical activity; engage in regular aerobic exercise.
- ❑ **Limit the amount of time** you spend consuming news media or social media if you are finding it overwhelming or distressing.
- ❑ **Do hobbies or activities** that you enjoy, calm you down or focus your mind and body. These could be arts and crafts, physical activity, listening to music, reading, journaling, watching TV or movies, or connecting with friends (remotely).
- ❑ **Understand** that the people around you are probably also finding this situation stressful and they might also be having difficulty controlling their emotions. Try to resolve conflict.
- ❑ **If you continue** to feel overwhelmed, out of control or unable to calm down, seek help from a mental health professional.
- ❑ **Be kind to yourself and each other.** We'll work through this together.



Tips to Help Teens Cope During COVID-19

When our world changes quickly and suddenly because of things like COVID-19, it is common to experience changes in our thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Feelings of anxiety, fear or worry are typical reactions to stressful situations.

TYPICAL REACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed, frustrated or angry, worried or anxious.
- Feeling restless, agitated, on 'high alert' or unable to calm down.
- Being teary, sad, fatigued or tired; losing interest in usually enjoyable activities; or finding it difficult to feel happy.
- Worrying about going to public spaces, becoming unwell or contracting germs.
- Constantly thinking about the situation, unable to cope or think about much else.
- Experiencing physical symptoms such as increased fatigue or other uncomfortable sensations.

Everyone reacts to stressful situations differently, so you should not expect any specific reaction. Still, take a few moments to talk with the teens in your life about how they are feeling and what may help them during this difficult time. Remind them that all of these thoughts and feelings are common right now, and discuss simple [self-care strategies](#) that will help manage symptoms of anxiety and depression. Here are a few tips for mental wellbeing and coping from teen Mental Health First Aid:

- **Maintain a daily routine** with consistent sleep, activity and study patterns.
- **Stay connected** with others and try to find moments of gratitude.
- **Talk to people** you feel comfortable with about your feelings or worries, then give yourself permission to stop worrying.
- **Eat breakfast** every morning. If possible, maintain a healthy diet with fruits and vegetables, and eat meals at regular times throughout the day.
- **Limit coffee or energy drinks**, as these will increase feelings of anxiety and make it difficult to relax.
- **Look for patterns** or be aware of situations that make you feel particularly worried or anxious. When you're in these situations, try relaxation or distraction techniques or ask a family member or friend to help.
- **Relieve times of high anxiety** with physical activity; engage in regular aerobic exercise.
- **Limit the amount of time** you spend consuming news media or social media if you are finding it overwhelming or distressing.
- **Do hobbies or activities** that you enjoy, calm you down or focus your mind and body. These could be arts and crafts, physical activity, listening to music, reading, journaling, watching TV or movies, or connecting with friends by phone, videoconference or text.
- **Understand** that the people around you are probably also finding this situation stressful, and they might also be having difficulty controlling their emotions. Try to resolve conflict.
- **If you continue** to feel overwhelmed, out of control or unable to calm down, seek help from a mental health professional.
- **Take time for yourself.**
- **Be kind to yourself and each other.** We'll work through this together.

If feelings do not improve, consider reaching out to a mental health professional or seeking online therapy. With the right information and resources, we can #BeTheDifference for the teens in our lives during and after COVID-19.



Supporting Friends During COVID-19

It's hard not to be with your friends at school or on weekends because of physical distancing. However, you can still stay connected to them while at home with video chats, text messaging, phone calls and social media. You can maintain your friendships and support each other through this difficult time.

While you're connecting with your friends online or on the phone, it's important that you look for warning signs that may indicate they may be struggling and need help. Pay attention to what they are posting and sharing online. Negative messages, photos, videos, links, comments or hashtags may suggest the person is in emotional distress.

If this is the case, reach out to your friend to ask how they are doing and get them connected to a supportive and responsible adult, if needed.

If you or a friend feels overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression or anxiety, or like you want to harm yourself or others, call 911 or one of the national crisis resources below.

NATIONAL CRISIS RESOURCES

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 800-273-TALK (8255) for free 24/7 support. Call 888-628-9454 for support in Spanish.
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text "MHFA" to 741-741 for free 24/7 crisis counseling.
- **Lifeline Crisis Chat:** Visit www.crisischat.org to talk online with crisis centers around the United States.
- **The Trevor Project:** Call 866-488-7386 or text "START" to 678-678 for mental health support specialized for the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress Helpline:** Call 800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 667-46 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR TEENS

These online resources are free and may help you and your friends cope with stress and manage your mental health during these uncertain times.

- **Jed Foundation:** Guidance on how to recognize a friend's emotional distress online and how to get that friend help. [Help a Friend in Need: A Guide for Facebook and Instagram.](#)
- **TeensHealth:** A safe place for teens to access honest and accurate information on mental health issues including specific information about COVID-19 and coping with stress. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): How You Can Make a Difference, Stress and Coping Center.](#)
- **National Alliance on Mental Health:** Information for teens and young adults about managing mental health and supporting friends. [Teens and Mental Health.](#)
- **Born This Way Foundation:** Programs and campaigns for young people to increase access to resources and services that support their mental health and build communities that make mental and emotional health a priority. [Resources for Help and Self-Care Tips.](#)

It's important to stay connected with your friends while practicing physical distancing and provide support however you can. There are fun ways to stay connected using technology and simple [self-care strategies](#) you can do at home to help manage your mental health.

Learn more about how you can bring tMHFA to your community at [MHFA.org/teens](https://www.mhfa.org/teens).



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