Adolescent Mental Health in 2020

Unique Challenges
Strategies For Parents

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HOW YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FEELING ABOUT COVID-19

What best describes how you feel about the COVID-19 outbreak?
WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT WHEN GOING BACK TO SCHOOL IN THE FALL

- The risk that I might bring COVID-19 home to my family members: 67%
- The risk that me and/or my classmates might get sick: 60%
- That school will start and then have to stop / will be disrupted if COVID-19 gets worse: 55%
- That necessary precautions (including social distancing and wearing masks) will not be taken seriously or followed by students: 55%
- The risk that teachers and other administrators might get sick: 50%
- That my school will not be prepared to handle a COVID-19 outbreak among teachers and students: 47%
- That necessary precautions will not be effectively put into place or enforced by administrators & teachers: 44%
- None, I am not concerned about the safety of going back to school: 2%
- Other (write in): 1%

Source: DoSomething.org Member Survey, August 10, 2020, n=1,177
What are you most concerned about regarding the safety of going back to school in light of COVID-19? (Select all that apply.)
More Than 34,312 Additional Screeners Have Anxiety Since COVID-19 Pandemic

Excess Moderate-to-Severe screening results above the Nov-Jan 3-month average (2606 moderate, 3689 severe)
More Than 54,093 Additional Screeners Have Depression Since COVID-19 Pandemic

Excess Moderate to Severe Depression Screens above the previous 3-month average (10,867 moderate to severe)
Normal vs. Problematic Reactions
General signs of emotional distress

• Internalizing
  • Academic problems
  • Difficulty sleeping
  • Difficulty concentrating
  • “Shutting down”
  • Social withdrawal
  • Somatic problems
  • Excessive time in social media or games

• Externalizing
  • Moodiness and defiance
  • Alcohol and drug use
  • Extreme sensitivity to criticism
  • Reckless or self-destructive behavior
  • Violence or “acting out”

(Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2020)
Specific concerns

- Depression
  - Negative thinking, expectancies, and comments
  - Statements of low self-esteem
  - Not enjoying normally pleasurable activities
  - Frequent crying
  - Suicidal indicators
    - Thoughts, statements, or writing about death or suicide
    - Speaking positively about the impact of death
    - Giving away valued items

- Anxiety
  - General sense of overwhelm
  - Avoidance of certain activities or groups
  - Panic attacks

(Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2020)
So, how can we help?
Seek first to understand…

- Communicate with **LOVE**
  - **Listening**
    - Open-ended questions, reflections
  - **Offering**
    - Feedback sandwich
      - Ask permission
      - Provide information
      - Ask for reactions
  - **Validating**
    - Reinforces self-efficacy, self-trust
  - **Empathizing**
    - Be in the hole with them
- All behaviors have a **purpose**
- Have persistence and don’t get discouraged

(CMC, 2016)
Emphasize healthy connectivity

- **Social**
  - Face time is important
  - A part of the family, not apart from the family

- **Behavioral**
  - If you act depressed, you feel more depressed
  - Avoidance and safety behaviors are central to anxiety

- **Emotional**
  - Being unable to identify and express emotions can lead to unhealthy routes of expression
Encourage healthy coping

- Physical health - Everything is harder if our bodies aren’t right
  - Sleep
  - Exercise
  - Nutrition
  - Screen time limits
- Meditation
- Talking through emotions and problems
- Therapy

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Additional strategies

• Rewarding/reinforcing positive behavior is key
  • Meaningful, consistent, and paired with the behavior
• Acting out – need consistent boundaries and limits
• Have access to social media and mobile devices
• Be on the same page as your parenting partner
• Take care of yourself (and your marriage)
  • As family leaders, you set the tone
  • If your emotional or relational health suffers, it flows down to the kids
Summary

• Our kids need our support, now more than ever

• Stay tuned-in to your child – if you know what normal looks like, you’ll know when it changes

• Keep warning signs in mind, and seek help if necessary

• Resilience and healthy coping skills can be built at home
Thank You!

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