

## Getting through the Pandemic with your Teen

Stress from the COVID-19 pandemic is getting to us all. For young adults, not having daily routine and typical outlets to process their thoughts and feelings, this is especially true. While not a comprehensive list, here are some things parents can do to help their young adult make it through this tough time:

### Structuring the day:

For days that your young adult has school at home, having a structured routine and schedule can help reduce anxiety not knowing what to do with their unstructured time and the humdrum lull that many report feeling as the day goes on. Sitting down with your teen and developing a routine that starts from the time they get up to the evening hours of the day can help to keep them on top of what often feels like an overabundance of school work and responsibilities. When creating a daily at home routine with them, be sure to include specific times for things like:

when to wake up	grooming / Getting dressed
mealtimes	classes / schoolwork
breaks	physical activity and exercise

### Sleep Hygiene

Since the pandemic adolescents and adults alike have reported irregular sleep schedules. From having trouble getting to sleep getting lost in internet or tv show rabbit holes to feeling the need for extra sleep, many are dysregulated in their sleep cycle. Having proper rest is important for every level of functioning. Research has shown that the best way to obtain and maintain proper sleep is to focus on waking up at the same time everyday (yes even days you could potentially sleep in) and eliminating naps. Doing these two things and listening to your body as to when it is time go to bed has shown to be the most effective way to insure your body and mind gets the rest it needs to maintain proper emotional and physical health.

### Physical Activity

With gyms access and sporting events being limited, as well as social distancing and spending more time sitting at a desk without break, many Americans have reported a major reduction in physical activity. Making time daily for aerobic exercise has long shown to be as effective as a low dose of an antidepressant for reducing depressive and anxious symptoms. Not only that, but longitudinal studies show that elderly adults that practiced regular intense aerobic exercise not only lived longer, but where maintained the same brain mass they had in their twenties!

### Safety

Sadly, since the pandemic suicide rates and suicidal ideations (having thoughts or fantasies about completing suicide) have sharply risen especially amongst teens. It is a myth that talking about suicide encourages or may cause a person to act on their thoughts. In fact, having an open, direct, and compassionate conversations make it safe for people to open and let go of the option. Checking in with your young adult about their mental health, and stress levels is incredibly beneficial to promoting overall positive mental health.

Lastly, with political tensions and civil unrest on the rise, more Americans are now first-time owners of firearms. It is important that if you own and keep firearms in your home that you keep them locked and out of reach. With the rise in suicidality and the easier access to firearms, sadly more families have lost loved ones who were able to act on a temporary impulse this year than ever before.

### Help

If you are concerned about your young adult's mental health, it is best not to further stigmatize their situation but not talking or addressing your concerns, but rather talk with them. If you need help doing so, reaching out to their guidance counselor or seeking out the advice from a mental health professional can make where you are not alone to provide the best care and support for your child.