

# How Young People can protect their well-being during coronavirus (CoVid-19)

## *6 strategies for managing a new (temporary) normal*

Being a teenager is difficult no matter what, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is making it even harder.

With school closures and cancelled events, young people are missing out on some of the biggest moments of their young lives — as well as, everyday moments like chatting with friends and participating in class.

For young people facing life changes due to the outbreak who are feeling anxious, isolated and disappointed, know this: **you are not alone.**



It is important to think about how we can practice self-care and look after our well-being in these more challenging circumstances.

## 1. Recognise that your anxiety is completely normal

If your school closing and the alarming headlines are making you feel anxious, you are not the only one. In fact, *that's how you're supposed to feel*.



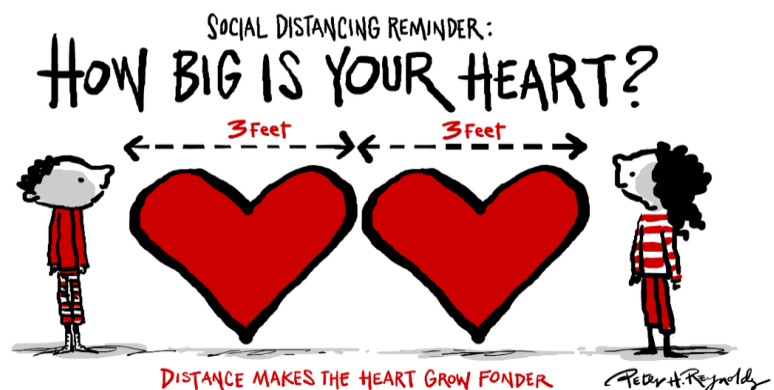
Psychologists have known for a long time that worries and anxiety are a normal and healthy function.

The 'role' of anxiety is to alert us to threats or danger and to help us to take measures to protect ourselves.

During a pandemic, anxiety is going to help you make the decisions that you need to be making right now — not spending time with other people or in large groups, washing your hands and not touching your face.



Those *feelings* are helping to keep not only you safe, but others too. This is also how we take care of members of our community. We think about the people around us, as well.



While anxiety around COVID-19 is completely understandable, make sure that you are using reliable sources such as, the UNICEF and the World Health Organisation websites to get information, or to check any information you might be getting through less reliable channels such as, social media (Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, TikTok, etc.)



If you are worried that you are experiencing symptoms, it is important to speak to your parents about it. Remember that illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally *mild*, especially for children and young adults. It's also important to remember, that many of the symptoms of COVID-19 can be treated.



Let your parent, carer or a trusted adult know if you're not feeling well, or if you're feeling worried about the virus, so they can help.

Remember, there are many effective things we can do to keep ourselves and others safe and to feel in better control of our circumstances:

- Wash our hands frequently
- Don't touch our faces
- Physical (social) distancing



## 2. Create Distractions

What psychologists know is that when we are living in very challenging circumstance or difficult conditions, it's very helpful to divide the problem into two categories:

- things I can do something about
- 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 manage that is creating distractions for ourselves.

Some ideas:

- Doing homework
- Watching a favourite movie (you can even create a virtual movie night with your friends and family - watch the same series or movie at the same time and chat using WhatsApp; Zoom, etc.)
- Getting in bed with a book, comic or magazine.

**Make a list of enjoyable activities you can do at home.** Try at least one each day to help create a 'break' (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 practicing social (physical) distancing, social media is a great way to connect.

The **connections we have with those around us are the cornerstones of our lives** and we need to work hard to strengthen them especially, in challenging times.

Spend time with other people each day and make time to chat using video calls or even the phone. Share what you did each day, a funny programme or film you watched, or a book you read. If you have worries, sharing them with family or friends can make them easier to manage.



#### Ways to connect:

- With family – share your day and ask about theirs
- Smile at neighbours and friends when you see them in the street (we don't have to chat to make a connection with other people)
- Ask a friend about their weekend and pay attention and listen when they tell you
- Ask your parents or carer about their childhood
- Write a letter or send a postcard to someone
- Get creative: Join in a Tik-Tok challenge like [#safehands](#)
- Schedule your screen time (agree/ plan how long you will spend online with your family... having agreed times helps us to better manage any conflict we may have at home. It also helps us to feel more 'in control'.)



*Sometimes, when we are very worried or confused social media can be very unhelpful. It is **important to take a break**. Hearing lots of worrying information can make it more difficult for us to feel 'in control' of our thoughts and feelings.*



#### 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.



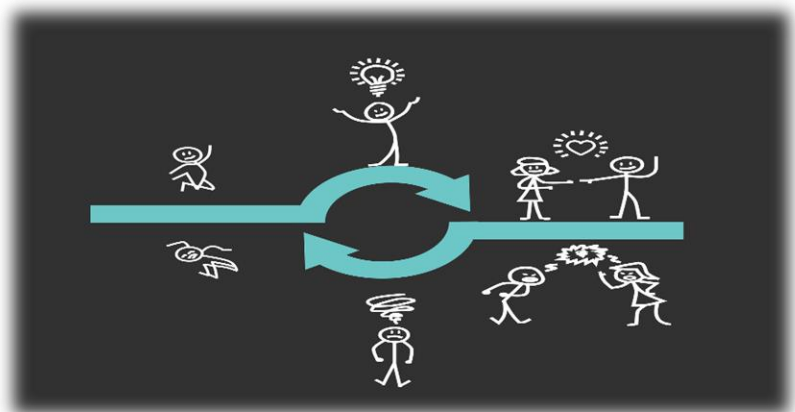
## 5. *Feel your Feelings...*

Missing out on events with friends, hobbies, or sports matches is incredibly disappointing. These are large-scale losses. They're really upsetting and rightly so.

The best way to deal with this disappointment..... *Let yourself feel it.*



When it comes to having a painful feeling, the only way out is through. *Go ahead and be sad, and if you can let yourself be sad, you'll start to feel better faster.*



Processing your feelings looks different for everyone.



Everyone manages their feelings in different ways.

- Some people find its helpful to draw what they are experiencing, others to write it down.
- Some people will want to talk to their friends and use their shared sadness as a way to feel connected in a time when they can't be together in person.
- Other people find doing things, feeling purposeful as the best way to manage their emotions.

<b>Distraction</b>	Puzzles, cleaning, crafts, Computer, Pokémon Go, TV, Netflix, Reading, Gardening, art, learn something, blogs, Instagram, letter writing	<b>PROS</b> Gives heart & mind a break Short Term relief Great to get through a crisis	<b>CONS</b> Cannot do for too long Does NOT resolve underlying issues Meds can make it hard to focus
<b>Emotional Release</b>	Exercise, yell, scream, run, shower, Dance, sing loudly, relay races, jump on bed, pop balloons, punch pillow, Bike ride, cry, belly laugh, jump rope	<b>PROS</b> Releases Stress & strong emotion Great for anger management Helps with Fear, guilt, shame	<b>CONS</b> Hard to do in public May feel unnatural or odd Too lazy or worn out to make effort
<b>Grounding</b>	Yoga, Hiking, Scout Camp, Smells, Observe Nature, journals, meditate, Prayer, use senses, walk on grass barefoot, sounds, slowly chew food	<b>PROS</b> Reduces physicality of stress and anxiety, feel connected or part of a group, helps with numbness or apathy, feel peace and community	<b>CONS</b> Can be hard to take responsibility for your place in society, takes effort & time, your mind tries to stay disassociated to avoid real issue
<b>Reality Check</b>	Thought challenge, is it reality or just a worry? Write down thoughts & read out loud- do they sound rational? Spend time doing what matters most. Does time reflect priorities?	<b>PROS</b> Helps shift long term negative thinking habits, Logic helps balance emotions, learn to solve own problems, realize you are okay, focus on what matters most	<b>CONS</b> Can be hard to if overly emotional, difficult if feel shame, no more group pity reward, no more excuses, may not seem logical at moment
<b>Access Higher Power</b>	Positive affirmations, prayer, faith, journals, connection, belief in something greater than yourself, worship, listening, spirit, scriptures	<b>PROS</b> Great for guilt, shame, or grief, builds connections, learn to trust, understand purpose, ownership of life, mind/body/spirit connection	<b>CONS</b> May be hard to do at work or in public, feeling unworthy can make it difficult to accept love, may think it's easier to stay angry or judgmental
<b>Service</b>	Smile, open doors, safe driving, physical labor, gifts, phone calls, food, humanitarian, cleaning, notes, volunteering, belong to organization	<b>PROS</b> Gets mind off self, realize your value and how can contribute, realize others value, social, friendship, calm energy	<b>CONS</b> May feel superficial, hard if fear rejection, hard to always be the giver, time & energy

What's important is that you do what feels right to you.



## 6. *Be Kind to Yourself and Others*

We all know that young people and adults are experiencing bullying and abuse online and, in the community, due to coronavirus.

Activating bystanders is the best way to address any kind of bullying or unkindness.



If you witness a friend 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.**