14 WAYS TO HELP TEENAGERS COPE DURING A CRISIS

**by Keri Wilmot**

The pandemic crisis has been complicated for all too emotionally cope with. Adjusting to a “new normal” has been a challenge, amidst feelings of frustration, fear, anxiety, anger and sadness.

Those everyday routines that many rely upon for structure and predictability to ease anxiety, disappeared overnight. Holidays, birthdays and family traditions are vastly different than years prior. Outlets for positive energy and interaction with friends and family members through gatherings, sports, weekend activities, celebrations, proms and graduations have been cancelled until further notice, with no idea if or when they will be rescheduled. Then there is the stress and feelings of being overwhelmed with the transition to virtual school.

*Teenagers often feel the same emotions but might still be learning how to understand and communicate these new and complicated feelings to others and don’t exhibit their emotions the same way as adults.*

There are some great ways to help teenagers cope and manage their emotions during the pandemic. Educating yourself about the crisis can help reduce anxiety, but an important part of the process for teens is to help them identify fun opportunities that can offer a distraction, as it redirects these feelings of fear and anxiety during times of unpredictable emotions. And let’s face it, these same activities that we participate in alongside our teens can also improve our own well-being, too!

1. **Set up Virtual Meetings and Chats with Family and Friends**  
   While a virtual meeting isn’t the same as hanging out in person, finding a time to log on together during a group chat with friends and teammates can be great way to fill the void of times missed with friends. It doesn’t have to be all conversation, there are many board games, card games and trivia games that are great to play with friends during these virtual meetings, too.
2. **Participate in Social Media Challenges Together**  
   Social media is full of challenges for teens, but why not join in on the fun! Let them show you a thing or two on how to participate in a Tik Tok dance challenge to see if you have what it takes to be the next viral sensation. Get out the makeup and have a fashion photo shoot where you master the art of the best Instagram pose.
3. **Schedule A Game Night**  
   Is there a board game or card game you like to play as a family? Schedule a night of the week for a family game night and learn to play new or classic card games, board games and dice games together.
4. **Find Ways to Laugh**  
   Even if you’re in the next room, text and share funny memes, jokes or videos on social media with each other. Laughter can be the best kind of medicine.
5. **Support Others**  
   Supporting others and being a helper can be a great way to channel positivity and feel more in control. Learn how to sew to create masks, coordinate nonperishable donations for a food pantry, and weed lawns of neighbors or community spaces to support others in need.
6. **Try Family Yoga**  
   Exercise and mindfulness through yoga is an excellent way to deal with stress, especially for teens who might be missing their activities and sports and want to continue to stay active and in shape.
7. **Have an Impromptu Blaster Party**  
   Odds are if you have tweens and younger teens you probably have not had the chance to pass on those blasters yet. Dig them out from the back of the closets, the garage and from under the bed, then find some good hiding spaces and prepare for a family blaster party. This is a great way to blow off some steam, have fun together and engage in some laugh out loud opportunities.

**Of these seven ideas what are some that you have used with families or think you might use?**

The Kids’ Book of Questions by Gregory Stock

Chat Pack for Kids

Everyday Speech – everydayspeech.com teaches social communication and social-emotional skills

Game nights with families

1. **Movie Night**  
   Is there a funny movie everyone in the family enjoys watching together? A new movie just released online that you can’t see in the theater. Have you watched all the *Star Wars* or *Avengers* movies in order yet? Pop the popcorn and get comfy while you spend a few hours escaping reality while watching movies and binge-watching new shows together.
2. **Cook Something New**  
   At some point life as we know it will resume, teenagers will be back to being independent and eating out more again with their friends. Find the time to share great grandma’s favorite chocolate chip cookies or teach them how to cook and bake simple recipes they will enjoy later in life with their friends and family members.
3. **Get Outside and Play**  
   Are you fortunate enough to live in an area where it’s possible to take a walk or go for a bike ride and still remain socially distant? If it’s safe and possible, getting outside for some exercise while enjoying the weather can help reduce stress.
4. **Paint, Color, Draw, Photograph and Create**  
   You don’t have to be DaVinci to paint by number or to color in the lines. Print out and frame some of those popular photos from Instagram and create a memory wall. Simple arts and crafts activities can help reduce stress levels and offer a new hobby to pass the time.
5. **Start a Virtual Book Club**  
   Are there books you’ve been wanting to read? Find a few books that offer unique stories and a chance to put reality aside, then talk about them together.
6. **Learn Those Life Skills**  
   Get out a needle and thread and learn how to sew a button. Gas up the lawnmower and cut the lawn. Log in to a bank account online and learn how to pay bills. Figure out how to fold those awkward bottom sheets. There are all sorts of life skills kids need practice to learn to prepare them for the future.
7. **Teach Others**  
   Educating yourself on best practices can help curb fear and anxiety. But this can be a hard concept for teens to understand. Enlist their help to conquer their fears, by putting them in charge of teaching the family and their siblings about ways to act and engage in a crisis. Roleplaying can also be taught using dolls.

**Of these 7 what have you tried or what do you think might be helpful?**

Youtube videos – Art Hub, teaches youth how to draw things. Kids can pick the video

Games at the park – “The Floor is Lava” (there’s youtube video’s that can show it)

Card games

**All of these can help with prevention or early intervention so a family or youth stays at baseline. Sometimes you still end up with a crisis. Afterwards it’s important to work through it and discover what might help if it comes up again. Below is a video that reminds us of the skills. Watch it and think about the skills. Then watch the conversation with the youth and identify the skills the provider is using.**

**YouTube Video:**

**Skills**

MI Tip of the Day: The Evoking Process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urgk7h7TWk0> (4:02)

**Watch and identify the skills used. Do it in 3 segments**

Using MI with young people who harm: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivPlhCD0pFY>