



## 11 SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF-CARE FOR ADOLESCENTS DURING COVID-19

Since COVID-19, many adolescents and teens have felt more stressed than ever. Without healthy ways to cope, this can put them at risk for mental health concerns. Self-care is an important life skill for teens as a way to each prevent and cope with stress. And while COVID-19 has been challenging for some teens, it has also provided more time to work on building self-care into their daily routines:

- **Allow for time** to self-reflect and think about what things support their happiness and well-being.
- **Allow for time** that doesn't compete with social commitments, extra activities or work.
- **Allow for time** to explore new skills or hobbies, like playing an instrument, drawing, journaling, science and technology, gardening, reading.

Here are suggestions to share with your teen on different ways to practice self-care. Many of these activities can be included in a coping toolbox to support their well-being. These self-care suggestions may not work for all teens because everyone is unique. The key is for your teen to find what works for them.

### Ideas for Your Teen's Coping Toolbox

1. **Carve out time.** Allowing for time is the first thing your teen needs for just about any activity. If you help your teen create a daily routine that includes time for self-care, it can become a habit now and in the future. Many of the activities below don't require a lot of time – some only take 15-20 minutes.
2. **Get ideas from other teens.** One way for your teen to start brainstorming self-care ideas is to hear what works for other teens and young adults. In these two videos, [high schoolers](#) and [college students](#) share different stressors they face, and the different forms of self-care they use to cope with their stress.
3. **Meditate.** Mindful meditation has been proven to change the structure and function of the brain. Mindful meditation and breathing practice may help some teens relax while lessening feelings of [anxiety](#), [depression](#), and stress. And it doesn't have to be learned in-person, It can also be learned online (there are plenty of YouTube instructional videos or smartphone apps).
4. **Practice yoga.** Yoga and other types of eastern methods involve stretching, improving flexibility, and connecting mind and body. These may be helpful for stress reduction and wellness. Yoga classes can be done by your teen online. A number of yoga studios also offer free streaming classes on sites like Instagram and Facebook live.

- 5. Exercise.** Exercise comes in many forms, so there are many options for your teen to explore. There's training for strength, endurance, and aerobic activity. There are free online videos and live online classes for exercising at home. Simply encouraging your teen to take a walk each day is great exercise, and something that you can do together as a family. Exercise not only helps to keep your teen physically fit, but can help to decrease [depression](#) and [anxiety](#).
- 6. Get more sleep.** Lack of sleep can be harmful to your teen's thinking, and how they feel physically and emotionally. Most young people need eight to nine hours of restful sleep to function at their best. Help your teen have as regular a sleep schedule as possible. If your teen establishes a good sleep routine now, it may be beneficial to them moving forward.
- 7. Express feelings through creativity.** Encourage your teen to choose a creative outlet to express their thoughts and feelings. This could be journaling (for example, start a gratitude journal), writing poetry, painting or drawing, photography, dancing, playing music. The key is to help them find ways to channel their emotions through art. While some may want to do this more seriously and take lessons, self-taught art is just as good. Remind them not to strive for perfection. Simply immersing themselves in creative arts can help to prevent negative thoughts and feelings.
- 8. Spend time with a pet.** If your family has a pet, this can be a great way for your teen to foster self-care. Cuddling with a pet, taking care of pets, and feeling a pet's unconditional love is something to take advantage of during extra time at home. And their pet doesn't necessarily need to be a "furry friend" – there's research to suggest that even pet fish can make a difference.
- 9. Check in with friends.** Meeting with peers and talking about what's challenging in life can help to promote well-being. Especially during COVID, when teens are feeling more isolated, group connections are important for resilience. There are ways for your teen to connect with friends in real time by phone, text, or video chat. There are even ways to watch TV and movies with friends remotely.
- 10. Turn off devices and/or disable notifications.** It may be hard for your teen not to have 24/7 use of their phone, especially if they can't see friends in person, but a break might really help. Your teen may have some feelings of withdrawal or anxiety about not responding immediately to new texts or online posts. Try to help them understand that scheduling breaks each day from constant texting and notifications is an important part of self-care. A great way to help them take a break from devices is by modeling it yourself.
- 11. Help someone else.** Our brains are wired for giving. In fact, when we give to others the chemicals released in our brains make us feel even better than when we receive. Before COVID, it was easier for your teen to join small local efforts at places like community centers, soup kitchens, senior living centers, children's hospitals. But even now, they can still find ways to give back. For example, sending cards to frontline workers, volunteering time to groups or individuals in need, or making face masks. Activities like these can help your teen feel that they are making a positive impact on another person's life.

To learn more about mental health concerns by child age group, visit the Project TEACH Parent and Family Page: <http://bitly.com/PTEACH-Family>

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