

Suffolk Region  
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Health & Wellness Report:

Coronavirus (CoV) continues to impact the world and with no end in sight, parents and students are taking a toll both mentally and physically, especially teenagers. With many parents having to work, or parents not having an income due to loss of positions, not being able to get through to unemployment, home schooling, afraid for their safety and the safety of their family, emotions are running high. Covid-19 does not care about adolescents, their social and biological imperatives and what social distancing is doing to them. Therefore, although adolescents are not considered high risk from the medical perspective, this is very much taking a toll on social and emotional development, health, behavior and academic performance. With depression and anxiety being a real issue for teenagers, the pandemic has made this worse. Some of the changes parents may see in their teens:

-**Social isolation and stress** may heighten vulnerability and exacerbate existing psychological difficulties.

-**Social distancing** of in-person interaction can have negative effects with social skills, including nonverbal cues.

-**Boredom** can set in without friends to “hang out with” which could lead to risky behaviors, deviance and rule breaking.

-**Without Classmates**, school performance is likely to take a hit, resulting in lower grades, lack of motivation or interest. Teenagers look forward to going to school to be with their friends. Spending time with friends has shown to excite and reward the system in the adolescent brain.

**Frustration and major disappointment**- The introduction of social distancing has left teenagers and graduating elementary students feeling a range of negative emotions. The cancelation of fifth grade trips, dances, road tests, graduations and proms is completely devastating for students of all ages.

**Adopting a NEW Mindset** will be key with helping our children (Keeping in mind that parents have their own set of worries and emotions). Now, more than ever, parents need to take a moment to address their wellbeing, BEFORE being the role model. Taking 5 minutes an hour to just breathe in deeply, slowly, look out the window, enjoy the wonders of nature, take a stroll around your yard and just clear your mind, sip a cup of tea in a quiet room or read an inspirational quote or two. A simple 5 minutes an hour can truly help to re-energize and recharge your brain. Re-assurance for all age children is important; let them know based upon their age what the new updates are on corona and how you will address the situation as a family- get their input, thoughts and ideas. Answer questions with facts versus emotion. They are receiving too much from social media that may not be true and adding to their stressors. Be their “facilitator” versus their teacher; the word teacher could be extremely intimidating for them especially since you are their parent and by nature they do not want to let you down. As hectic as it may be, seize this opportunity to be with your kids as a bigger part of their education. “Don’t create your schedule around the school schedule”- this is not realistic especially if you are working from home. “Schedules are great when everyone needs to leave at a certain time”. Your homeschooling schedule should be based around what works for the

family's quarantine schedule. Schedule intense subjects first- Math, Social Studies, and Science in case your constant help is needed. Leave the creative, self-directed ones for the afternoon, allowing you more time to do your work. Acknowledge in a loving and caring way that you understand how completely devastating the cancellation of major life events are for them, (ie. prom may not be on our forefront, but it's their sending off party and a huge part of their lives). Come up with what can be done at home instead.

**Be creative-** have extended family and friends help when they can, grandparents can help teach subjects via Zoom, Teams and facetime. Older siblings can teach more creative activities such as art, music and gym. Writing letters to relatives also helps with grammar, staying in touch and strengthening relationships. Start a BOOK CLUB with cousins, so much in life could be learned and taught once we are out of the "schooly" mindset.

**Home school groups** are in many communities, this could be an excellent resource as there are parents that homeschool all year long, prior to Covid-19. Reaching out to them for ideas, tips and support could prove beneficial.

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/index.html>

<https://www.cnn.com>

<https://www.who.int>