

MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON YOUTH

With the closing of schools and the change in schedules and rules for everyone, COVID-19 has radically shifted how we are operating as a society. With these changes can come a wide range of feelings including anxiety, depression, and anger. MHA's national office has reported a 12% increase in the first two weeks of March for people screening themselves for clinical anxiety. It's important that young adults and children feel they have space to talk about what they're feeling, and that their mental health is treated as a priority.

(CHILDREN)	WHAT TO EXPECT	(TEENS)
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Change in appetite</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Increased clinging behaviors, temper tantrums, and whining</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Loss of interest/withdrawal</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Headaches, stomachaches</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Competition for parents' attention</p> </div> </div>		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Ignoring health promotion behaviors</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Easily agitated</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Decrease in energy/general apathy</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Avoiding/cutting school (in this case home-based schoolwork)</p> </div> </div>

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 

Encourage open dialogue in your home where kids feel comfortable asking questions and receive reassurance and kindness
- 

Have them create a gratitude journal where they write at least one thing they are grateful for/one thing that is going well for them
- 

Make sure kids have positive outlets and routines; these can include exercise, regular phone calls with friends/loved ones, and limiting media consumption
- 

Reassure children that you, as their caregiver, are making sure they stay safe and that you are taking steps to ensure you stay safe too
- 

Model the behavior you'd like to see; make sure you're engaging in meaningful self-care and are talking to your kids about why it's important
- 

Connect with your child's teacher/counselor to see if a virtual session can be set up (many doctor's offices are utilizing tele-health, some at reduced cost to patients)

These behaviors are normal and expected; we understand it can be challenging to support children exhibiting difficult behaviors, but it's crucial that children feel supported and cared for, especially in uncertain times.

If your child exhibits behavior that puts themselves or those around them in danger, please call the **Harris Center Emergency Line 713-970-7000** and select **Option 1** or **9-1-1** (you can request a mental health unit be sent).

If you'd like more information about mental health and COVID-19, visit our website:

<https://mhahouston.org/covid19help/>

SOURCES:
 Boudreau, Emily, and Elio Pajares. "Helping Children Cope with Coronavirus and Uncertainty." *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, 13 Mar. 2020. www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/03/helping-children-cope-coronavirus-and-uncertainty.
 HHS. "Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)." Edited by SAMHSA. *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*, 1 Mar. 2020. www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf.
 "Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19." Edited by NCIRD N/A, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 Apr. 2020. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html.
 "Mental Health and COVID-19 – Information and Resources." Edited by MHA N/A, *Mental Health America*, 2020. mhanational.org/covid19/#ForParents.
 SAMHSA. Info. "Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation During an Infectious Disease Outbreak." Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health, SAMHSA, 16 Mar. 2020. www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf.

