

HOW MIGHT COVID-19 INCREASE TEEN SUICIDE RISK?

- **Increased feelings of isolation and disconnection from others.** You probably don't have as many opportunities to hang out and interact with friends and social supports, which can lead to more feelings of loneliness.
- **Reduced opportunities for fun and relaxation.** Having to stay at home even for things like school leads to less opportunities to do fun things that help protect us from strong emotions.
- **Increased stress at home.** Everyone may be more stressed right now, from distance learning to working from home. Chances are emotions are running high for everyone. When we are not able to create separation or take a break from the stress, our emotions get bigger and more intense.
- **Feeling like a burden to your family.** Your family may be under increased financial strain or be experiencing increased stressors due to COVID, and if you already feel like a burden to family, this may be even worse right now.
- **Increased exposure to social media and news coverage.** You may be spending more time on electronics or watching the news, and less time being active. Constantly hearing and seeing negative or disappointing news may lead to increased sense of hopelessness.
- **Decrease in taking care of your body.** When we don't move our bodies, eat well, or get enough sleep, we increase our vulnerability to strong emotions.



HOW TO REDUCE SUICIDE RISK DUE TO COVID-19:

- **Stay as connected as possible.** Try to make meaningful connections either virtually or safely in real life. Push yourself to spend time engaging with others in any way you can, even if you have doubts it will help. Try meeting up at an outdoor space (e.g., beach, park), scheduling video chat hangouts, write a letter or draw a picture for someone and mail it to them, or do shared activities together over video chat (e.g., homework, arts/crafts, watching a movie, etc.).
- **Develop a routine.** Having specific things to do at various times of the day often provides a sense of security and predictability. Developing a schedule can also help increase engagement in activities and feelings of accomplishment and self-confidence, which directly reduce feelings like anxiety. Make sure to plan breaks and fun activities into your day too so when you feel stressed, it isn't as bad. Try to get your body moving in any way possible on the daily to stay healthy and reduce stress.

- **Isolate carefully.** Spending all of your time in your room away from family can actually make things worse. If you feel that the home environment is stressful, take a break by putting on headphones, go in the backyard, take a mindful bath or shower, go for a walk, or find ways to change up your environment like building a fort, re-arranging/re-decorating your room, or creating a “safe place” to relax in that is calming. Taking a break can put you back in a positive headspace.
- **Share how you are doing/feeling/thinking on a regular basis with family and friends.** If you make it part of your routine, you will have an easier time discussing things if they become more challenging. Let the people around you know how well or poorly you are coping on the daily. One way to do this is to talk about a high and low of the day.
- **Take care of yourself.** Be a good friend to yourself. Validate your feelings and experiences and remind yourself that this too will pass, and you are doing the best you can. Yes, it has been rough!
- **Be mindful of screen time.** We are so lucky to have all our electronic entertainment, yet it can take us away from our feelings, or contribute to more stress and anxiety. It also gives us less time to do things that might be more meaningful. Pay attention to how long you spend on your screen and consider taking breaks or doing other things in place of screen activities. Call a friend, listen to music, paint/draw/color, bake or cook something, clean your room, do homework, play with your pets, read a book, make a vision board or poster of all your favorite things.
- **Do fun things.** Make it a point to build fun activities into your day. Do things you enjoy, learn a new skill, do something you are good at, make a “menu” of fun activities you can do to help yourself feel better in case you get stuck.
- **Get support or help when it is all too much.** You are not alone and there are always people that can help you, even if you don’t feel that way in the moment. Reach-out to a family member, friend, or trusted person if you are feeling down. You don’t have to get through this by yourself.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Mindfulness Mobile Device App: Smiling Mind

Book: Don’t Let Emotions Run Your Life by Sheri Van Dijk

Book: Stuff that Sucks: A Teen’s Guide to Accepting What You Can’t Change and Committing to What You Can by Ben Sedley

For Mental Health Education Resources, Please Visit us at: www.choc.org/MentalHealthToolkit

CRISIS HOTLINES: Staffed 24/7

Crisis Text Line: 741-741 (text)

California Youth Crisis Line: 800-843-5200

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255