Mental Health and Teens During COVID-19 Pandemic
Randa Bush & Hatim Omar
Prevalence of attempted suicide in high school students, 2019

Note: Based on data from the 2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Change in share of reported coronavirus cases in minors since May 28
Objectives

▪ Teen response to COVID-19 Pandemic
▪ Key areas teens are struggling
▪ Ways to provide support, regulation, balance, and structure for your teen
▪ Ideas for maintaining and promoting mental and emotional health
▪ Signs and symptoms that may indicate further help is needed
Situational trauma

Trauma can be caused by man-made, technological and natural disasters, including war, abuse, violence, mechanized accidents (car, train, or plane crashes, etc.) or medical emergencies.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_trauma#Situational_trauma
3 E's of Trauma

- Event
- Experience
- Effect
How are teens responding to the pandemic?

- Wide and varied responses
  - Frustration
  - Uncertainty
  - Hopeful
  - Disengaged
  - Dismissive/Indifferent
  - Creatively
  - Anger

- Asking Why?
  - Meaning-making

- Observing, watching, listening
  - Friends and family
  - Social media
  - News
How Are You Feeling About this Pandemic?

- Anger
- Frustration
- Confusion
- Fearful
- Sad
- Boredom
“At the end of the day people (teens) won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou
Key Areas Teens Are Struggling

- Boundaries
- Regulation
- Connectedness
- Active Engagement
- Self-Care
Ways to Provide Support

- CONNECT (Trust-Based Relational Interventions, TBRI)
- Provide felt safety and security
  - Physical and emotional
- Hugs
- Be fully present and be your authentic self
- Acknowledge when you don’t have the answers
- Be available, but not overbearing
- Resist projection
- Repair ruptures
Regulation and Balance

- EMPOWER (TBRI)
  - Internal physical needs (hydration/sensory/blood sugar)
  - External environment (self-regulation skills, transitions, rituals)

- DBT Skill: PLEASE MASTER

- Routine/Structure

- Distress/Comfort
  - Grounding Techniques
  - Mindfulness
  - Reflection
Equip and Hold Accountable

▪ CORRECT (TBRI)
  ▪ Equip teens with skills for responding under stress
  ▪ Equip yourself with skills for responding to your teen under stress

▪ Utilize moments and shared experiences for processing and critical thinking

▪ Do not leave your teen to their own devices (figuratively and literally)

▪ Encourage limiting exposure to news

▪ Model what you would like to see from your teen

▪ Share power and choice
Maintaining and Promoting Mental Health

- Create a routine, that includes self-care
- Have fun, get creative!
- Notepad check-ins
- Normalize and validate feelings
- Listen: Allow space for venting frustrations/disappointment
- Find ways to support connection with others
- See the bigger picture
- Serve / Work
- Realistic expectations
A program for families to eat together, have fun, and grow closer through conversation.
myStrength

- Kentuckians can download the myStrength app for free using the code “seethegood.”
- myStrength Tools
  - Stress management strategies
  - Parenting tips for these challenging times
  - Emotional support tools
  - Videos and activities
When to seek professional help

Teens: It’s Ok If You Are Not Ok

- Sleeping too much or barely sleeping at all
- Eating less or more than usual
- Feeling more irritable, alone, sad, tearful, or numb
- Thinking thoughts that scare you
- Difficulty relaxing or shortness of breath— not due to physical illness
- Lack of motivation to do things that used to matter to you
- Isolating or withdrawing yourself from others
- Spending excessive amounts of time on social media or screens/devices
- Fighting more with friends or family members
- Feeling unsafe or afraid
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Finding unhealthy ways to cope; like tobacco, alcohol or drugs
When to seek professional help
Parents: It’s Ok To Ask For Help

- Lack of motivation to do things that used to matter to you
- Increase in frustration and irritability
- Losing your temper more often than you would like
- Thinking thoughts that scare you
- Increased anxiety and stress about the future
- Difficulty coping and calming yourself when stressed
- Fighting more with family members or friends
- Feeling overwhelmed with too many tasks and responsibilities
- Loss of confidence in yourself as a parent
- Isolating or withdrawing from others more than usual
- Increased cravings and urges to use alcohol or drugs to cope
Resources

- Watch, Ask, and Listen: How to tell if your child or teen is anxious or depressed
  - https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/watch-ask-and-listen-how-tell-if-your-child-or

- Resources to Support Adolescent Mental Health

- Signs of Normal Development Ages 13-18
  - https://www.thewholechild.org/parent-resources/age-13-18/signs-of-normal-development-stages-ages-13-18/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwwr32BRD4ARIsAAJNF_3ON_vB8mWiuWau9e41kGQw3wJUQhO6r_DsnPKP_SBQ2f9enK4LEYaAsxTEALw_wCB

- Trust-Based Relational Intervention
  - https://child.tcu.edu/about-us/tbri/#sthash.hbhILYih.dpbs

- Dinner Table Project
  - https://thedinnertableproject.org/

- MyStrength
  - https://newvista.org/mystrength