

Most of us are feeling worried about the uncertainty of the current situation, and this will include young people. That is completely understandable. Things are changing on a daily and sometimes hourly basis.

It's important that all of us look to the people we trust to support us; family member, friends, and perhaps your colleagues. Reach out to them to help you make sense of things - be open if you have fears and seek answers. Your worries may feel trivial, but that's fine. If face-to-face contact is not an option, find other ways to connect with people including using technology.

I have been thinking a lot about young people and I have been in contact with a lot of students and it seems that their concerns are slightly different to ours. For young people, especially teenagers, their anxieties seem to be more about being isolated (in the house with the rest of their family), not having a routine and the structure of school (even if they normally don't like or even often attend) and the social and emotional connection of being with their peers (even though they seem to fall out all the time). There are valid reasons for them to feel like this.

Teens and young adult brains are not yet fully developed in the area of logic, problem solving and control. This does not fully develop until the mid-twenties therefore it is important to understand WHY they are impulsive, dramatic and over emotional at times.

This is a time where teens and young people are forming their identity, they are figuring out who they are and they are establishing their own values and beliefs apart from their parents. This is a time when they begin to "separate" from their families both geographically and emotional so their opinions may differ from yours and it's important to respect them and listen. Also to realise that it may be difficult for them to be cooped up in the house with the rest of the family so it is not UNNATURAL for them to want to be in their rooms a lot of the time.

Along with the other stuff involved in their brain development it is natural to feel self-absorbed, self-centred and invincible. They may feel like WHY can't I go out WHY can't I be with my friends and WHY is this a big deal?

So what can I do to help them?

The most important thing is to have *sympathy and listen*. Nothing like this has ever happened before in most of our lifetimes. These teens and young adults are missing once-in-a-lifetime events, and there is no way to stop or rewind the clock so that they can have these moments back. Let them talk to you about what they are missing, and instead of dismissing their concerns or comparing them to the death and despair caused by the

virus, hear them, understand that these are big moments in their lives, and *let them grieve the loss of these opportunities.*

Next, talk with them about how they can look at what they CAN do right now and not what they CAN'T and what they WANT to do.

Encourage them to use technology to try to come up with creative ways to enrich their lives without having to see their friends and attend events in person. Be committed to this partnership in problem-solving, and be flexible about ways to help them feel connected to the events and people they feel that they are missing.

Encourage teens and young adults to try and think about others as well as themselves at this time. A great example is the "clapping to our key workers" every week. It's important for you to try and model to them empathy for others... making cards/ posters to display outside for the bin-men, sending cards to care homes; anything you can think of that will make them think about other people and how you can all help as a family right now. It may help them see beyond their own social woes and get a better *sense of the bigger picture.*

Finally, if you find that your child seems to be withdrawn or suffering with more than "normal anxiety"; reassure them that they are not alone. If you think they may be in crisis please feel free to reach out to school/ myself via email or encourage them to talk to friends. I am available for online chats whenever needed.

Most importantly-- take care of yourself, too! All the tips listed above and in the information sent to your child are relevant to you too!

Take time to think about your own stress and anxiety, practice what you preach regarding hygiene, exercise, social distancing and the way you use social media.

(AnnFreud.org) (Psychologytoday.com)