

## Talking with Young People about COVID-19

**Engaging our teens in dialogue is important for everyone’s well-being and to help them understand why it’s so important to follow physical distancing and the Stay at Home Order.**

As a parent or guardian, it can be hard to know how to talk with teens about COVID-19, particularly when we are anxious and don’t feel as though we have all of the information ourselves. Be sure to remind them that we’re all in this together and even though it may be quite some time before the pandemic is over, it will resolve, and life will get back to normal.

### How to start a conversation

- Ask direct, but open-ended questions, such as:
  - How are you feeling about what’s happening with COVID-19?
  - What do you see as your role in preventing the spread of the virus? [#DoingMyPartCO](#)
  - What can you do to help protect the rest of your family and any other people you are around?
  - I have been taking a lot of walks, partly to cope with my own worries. What are you doing—or planning to do—to cope with anxiety or stress?
  - Now that school is closed and we all need to engage in social distancing, what are some ways you can spend your time?
  - What are your plans for socializing? What are your ideas for getting some exercise?
  - What questions do you have about COVID-19? Even if I don’t know the answers, maybe we could do some research together. (See recommended resources, below.)
  - How can you tell the difference between “hype” or “myths” and real information? (See recommended resources, below.)

### Quick tips

- Validate how hard this is for your teen. Tell them directly that it’s legitimate to feel disappointed about missing out on time in high school, special events or other activities. They may feel a full range of emotions from worry and fear to frustration and anger.
- If you think they’d be open to it, share this coping strategies ideas page with your teen or complete it together. (Note: some ideas may need to be adapted to comply with current recommendations for social distancing.)
- If your teen is actively resisting taking recommended precautions and/or is arguing with you about following the rules, consider sharing [this article](#) from a University of Colorado professor about Flattening the Curve.
- Hold a family meeting to talk about the rules of the house during this crisis. Teens need clear expectations and family rules that will be enforced.

### Things to do

- Maintain or create a flexible routine with your teen that includes school work, chores, online socializing, meal times, fun family time (games, movies, baking) and time outside.
- Help others. Brainstorm concrete ideas about what you could do to help others in the community. We are all in this together! Could you donate canned food to an organization that needs it? Could you FaceTime relatives or friends to check in on them? Could you help spread valid information sources on social media? Visit [Help Colorado Now](#) for volunteer opportunities or to donate (supplies, money, blood or time). Visit [El Paso County Public Health Community Resource](#) page for local volunteer needs.
- Make plans to deal with boredom: Like all of us, teens may get a little restless after a few days at home. Here are some ideas to help combat boredom:
  - Make a list of fun (or productive) ideas such as checking out [Pikes Peak Library District](#) for free online content including movies, e-books and music; learn something new on Khan Academy or EdX which feature online courses.
  - Go outside! This could include: going for a walk or run, playing with a pet, bike riding, stargazing, reading in the shade, or hiking. Remember to follow physical distancing requirements and avoid playgrounds, pavilions and other closed areas in city and county parks. Remind them to avoid congregating at trail heads, in parking lots or on basketball courts. Remind them that skate parks are closed.

#### Where to Get Help

- If you or anyone in your family needs support dealing with feelings of isolation or anxiety, or any other mental health concerns, please immediately contact Colorado Crisis Services which provides confidential and immediate support, 24/7/365 on the phone 1-844-493-8255, text (text TALK to 38255), or chat online (<http://www.coloradocrisiservices.org>). You can call/text/chat about anything in your life that you feel you need help with or want to talk about.
- If you or your teen are concerned because your teen vapes, consider sending them [this article](#) about why quitting now is a good idea. Resources to help your teen quit are available from the [Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership](#)

#### Recommended Resources for Accurate Information:

- **If you are in El Paso County and have non-urgent questions about COVID-19, please call the El Paso County Public Health call center at 719-575-8888.**
- If you have general questions about COVID-19, you can call **CO HELP at 303-389-1687 or 1-877-462-2911**. You can also email [COHELP@RMPDC.org](mailto:COHELP@RMPDC.org) for answers in English and Spanish (Español), Mandarin (普通话), and more.

#### Reliable sources of information

- [El Paso County Public Health](#)
  - [El Paso County Public Health Facebook](#)
  - [El Paso County Public Health Twitter](#)
  - [El Paso County Public Health Instagram](#)
- [Colorado Department of Health and Environment website](#)
  - [CDPHE Facebook](#)
  - [CDPHE Twitter](#)
- [Centers of Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#)
  - [CDC Facebook](#)
  - [CDC Twitter](#)