



Well-Being of Teens: How Covid Affects Mental Health

FREE LIFE-CHANGING ONLINE PARENTING COURSES

In these video-based, interactive classes—available 24/7—you’ll learn a consistent, encouraging style of parenting that will benefit you and your children for a lifetime. With this self-study course, you have the option of when to participate based on your own schedule and at your convenience. Gain additional insight from your online group leaders as they provide support and feedback.

Choose from four available courses:

- **Active Parenting: First Five Years:**
For parents of children from birth to age 5
- **Active Parenting 4th ED:**
For parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Active Parenting of Teens:**
For parents of preteens and teens
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:**
For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an “active” parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

The purpose of parenting as we define it in all Active Parenting programs is : *To protect and prepare children and teens to survive and thrive in the kind of society in which they will live.* The world in which we now live is home to a word that two years ago most of us had never heard, Covid. That word now threatens the ability of our children to survive and thrive. Parents and caregivers are being tested like never before as we fight for their well-being. One of the groups hit hardest by this pandemic is our teens. We have talked a lot about how Covid affects our health. Understandably, we have focused on how Covid affects physical health, but many recent articles show how Covid also affects mental health and impacts the well-being of teens.

Loneliness and isolation are difficult for anyone, but for teenagers it can be particularly devastating. Children develop independence from their parents or guardians during their teen years and peers have an increasingly important role in this. Friends become a part of a larger support network as teens start to navigate the world without their parents. Friends also contribute to a teen’s sense of belonging, one of the foundational goals of humans. The need to protect our teens from the pandemic has resulted in many teens being isolated from this crucial support system. Strong, healthy friendships have a positive and deep impact on teens and help set the foundation for well-being into adulthood. The relationships teens form with their peers are as important as physical health and doing well in school. For most teens, the lessening of restrictions on social interactions is good news: a chance to get back to building a foundation for well-being. On the other end of the spectrum, teens who had negative experiences with peers before the pandemic tended to see social distancing as a relief.

The bottom line: social interaction and the development of healthy relationships lay the foundation for a teen’s sense of well-being that carries forward into adulthood. So as parents and caregivers, we need to consider how Covid affects the mental health of teens in addition to physical health. It is a worthwhile goal for safe social interaction to become part of our daily experience again. In the meantime, as the CDC advises, “**Help adolescents stay socially connected:** Encourage adolescents to reach out to friends and family via phone, video chats, social media or even via video games. Schools may have tips and guidelines to help support their social and emotional needs.” And don’t forget to monitor your child’s overall health—mental *and* physical.

© Dr. Michael Popkin, PhD

Visit [ACFCcares.com](https://www.acfccares.com) for more information and to start your Active Parenting journey today.

To learn more about effective parenting skills, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help are available for parents of children of all ages, from toddler to teen. To access the Online Video Library, go to the **ACFC website**, click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.