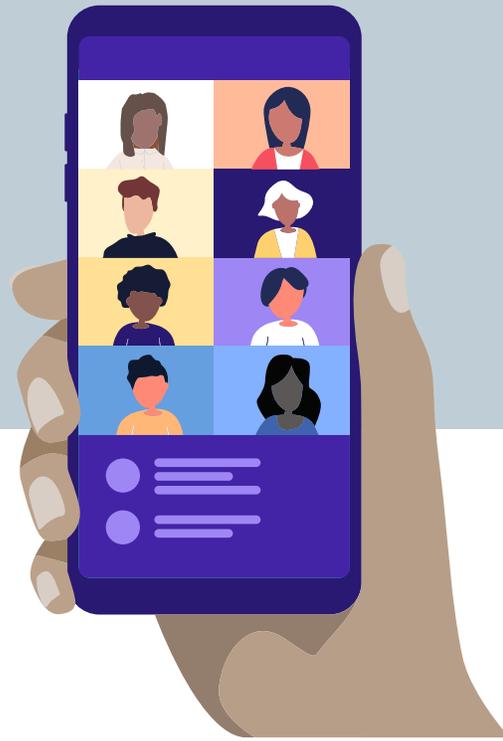


HERE NOW

A program through The Jewish Board
ProjectHereNow.org



Staying Connected to the Teens in your Program and Community

Teens, who are already dealing with the stress that comes with being a teenager, now find their lives in complete upheaval due to COVID-19. Across the nation, teens are finding these times hard and frustrating as they face fear and anger over missed class trips and prom, cancelled plays and performances, and are now dealing with virtual classes and school.

During these times, it can be a challenge to check in with teens who you typically engage as teachers, counselors, babysitters, big brothers/sisters, and other forms of role models, providing the support they need.

By giving teens, who are more tuned into the virtual world than any other age group, activities and actions that meet them where they are at, we can strive to help support them during a time of extreme social distancing.

They might not want to admit it, but they need our support now more than ever. These tips and solutions can help them and their friends maintain healthy social contact, even from a physical distance.

Tips

Keeping in Touch from Afar

- **Limit discussing the source of stress.** Find things to talk about other than the health crisis. Teens interact with social media on a daily basis, and are constantly consuming information related to the health crisis. Instead of focusing on COVID-19 and heightening their anxieties, be more informal and keep things fun, interesting or even mundane (i.e. funny videos, plant or pets updates, recipe suggestions).
- **Realize this situation is tough and isolating.** Sometimes what they want most is to be with friends or they might not feel comfortable confiding in adults. Suggest they reach out to friends and pick some activities from the list that follows to do together.
- **Help provide structure.** Work with them to them create schedules and structure their day. Being away from school can make it difficult for them to have a “regular day.” And school work is important, but make sure there is time for fun!
- **Validate their feelings.** If you talk about the pandemic during a conversation, validate their feelings of anger, loss, anxiety, or anything else, rather than trying to assure them all the time. Don’t update them with facts and instead ask them how they are feeling and what you can do to help -- without trying to turn the conversation into a therapy session.
- **Do more than reassure.** If you want to reassure them instead of saying “Everything is going to be alright,” ask them “What is something you can control?”, “What is a project you can complete right now?”, “Can you help me with X?” These are ways to connect with them that elicit positive feelings, as well as suggesting opportunities to focus on things that are fulfilling to them.
- **Be a little retro: dial that number!** If teens do not have access to computers, or if they’re tired of being online because that is their typical outlet throughout the day, see they would like to talk over the phone.
- **Highlight how their actions are addressing the problem.** Being at home can make them feel helpless, but remind them by just being inside they are helping the world at large by lessening the spread of the pandemic. Remind them as well that this is chance for the world as whole to also lessen our carbon footprint.
- **Hit pause.** This is a great time to remind your teens that the pause button has been hit, encourage them a little bit to stress less about their school work and use this time to do activities they haven’t had time for in the past.

Activities Thank you to the teens of HereNow for brainstorming these activities!

- **Be creative online.** Have them break up their usual online activities with video chat karaoke sessions, online open mike nights, virtual lunches, and trivia games.
- **Teach a talent!** If your teen is good at a certain activity, whether it be yoga, drawing, sports, etc., encourage them to become a teacher online. This will give them a sense of purpose, structure, and something to keep their mind off the current state of affairs.
- **Host an online viewing party.** Have viewing parties for TV shows or Movies and have everyone watch at the same time via Netflix Party, or Scener. During commercials, stay interactive by suggesting people say their favorite quote or recreate scenes from the TV show in one minute or less.
- **Create a Mundane Monday Newsletter.** Give teens an opportunity to update each other on the most mundane thing they did that day while also trying to make it as funny as possible.
- **Perform Online Award Ceremonies.** Have teens share their impressive feats i.e: Weirdest Thing I Did in the Last 24 hours, Most Mundane Thing I Did in the Last 24 hours, Skills I’ve Picked Up From Putting up with My Siblings in the Last 24 hours.
- **Online improv!** Google improv games online and video chat online to play these games. Improv is a fun way to get everyone interacting and laughing together.
- **Support Seniors from Afar.** Any of these activities can also be modified in ways for the teens to reach out to the community. Contact a retirement home for example to see if they can set up a computer and have their residents interact with the teens through these games and fun ventures.
- **Host a virtual lunch room.** Invite teens to a video chat during lunch hours so everyone can eat lunch together. Invite those who want, to share names, pronouns, and if they could have a mundane superpower what it would be (or another fun mixer).
- **Start a book club.** You can even perform your favorite scenes from the chapter you just read!
- **Be a music video star!** Have everyone act out scenes in a music video to create a full performance that can be shared with family, friends, and more!

Resources

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1-800-273-8255

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

The Crisis Text Line is free, 24/7 support for those in crisis. Text 741741 from anywhere in the US to text with a trained Crisis Counselor.

Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA): 1-877-88-JCADA

Provides safety planning during business hours for people who may be quarantined with an abuser.

Free WiFi for Students During COVID-19

For students that may not have as much access to technology, Spectrum (<http://https://www.spectrum.net/support/internet/coronavirus-internet-offer-students/>) as well as Comcast (<https://corporate.comcast.com/covid-19>) is offering free wifi during this time.

HereNow (<http://projectherenow.org/>)

HereNow is teen-driven Jewish movement to provide support, build connections, increase wellbeing and resilience, and reduce stigma around mental health for teens, providing resources on how to deal with mental health issues.

Here are some additional ways to engage teens from afar shared by our community (thank you!):

- Roll20 is a site that allows you to play tabletop role-playing games remotely online: <https://roll20.net/>
- GamePigeon has a collection of two-player games that can be played on iPhones and Android phones: <http://gamepigeonapp.com/>
- Google Museum Views provides virtual museum tours from around the world: <https://artsandculture.google.com/project/streetviews>
- Kahoot is an online resource to discover and create online games: <https://kahoot.com/>

Follow us on Social Media:

 @Project.Here.Now +  @ProjectHereNow

