



PARENTING TEENAGERS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS QUARANTINE

If the idea of being locked up with your own offspring for more than 3 days is as terrifying to you as it is to me, then this article is for you.

None of us have ever lived through anything like this, so it goes without saying that for our teenagers this whole coronavirus experience is otherworldly new.

So here are some practical things you can do to help your teenager through this time.

Don't be a super parent. During the coronavirus season, the last thing you need to be doing is trying to win the parent of the year award (as the ceremony will likely be cancelled anyway). Your parenting goals should be as simple as "let's get through this the best way we can".

Take care of yourself. The best that you can do for your teenager at this time is to make sure you are taking care of yourself.

In particular, it means being honest with yourself about your own levels of anxiety, disappointment and helplessness. It is important we give ourselves permission to acknowledge uncomfortable feelings and process them constructively. If we don't acknowledge our feelings we will end up taking it out on our teenagers.

See it from your teenager's perspective. Although the idea of not being allowed to go to school without being suspended seems like some sort of adolescent dream, deep down there will be some real disappointment and frustration for lots of teenagers if they can't go to school. They will be missing lots of key events in the school calendar, not to mention having physical proximity to the most important people in life – their friends.

Encourage teenagers to get some fresh air every day. If your teen can get at least a few minutes of direct sunlight on their face and breathe some fresh air every day, this will go some way to reducing cabin fever.

Give them some space. Define an area where they can just be for defined periods of time without having to worry about anyone bothering them.

Expect some frustration and try not to take it personally. It is likely your teen will express how much they dislike the house, the family, your parenting, the lack of anything to watch on TV (I know) or even just life in general. When they do, try not to take it personally (easier said than done) and hear it instead as them saying "coronavirus sucks!"

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Let them talk about how they are feeling. Anxiety, anger, disappointment and frustration are all feelings that are entirely appropriate during this season of chaos. Resist the urge to try and fix them, minimise what is happening, or utter platitudes about everything being okay. What your teenager will benefit from most is someone to sit with them in the 'not okayness' of it all and validate that what they are feeling is appropriate and makes sense.

Share honestly with your teenager. It is good to let your teen know that this is all new for you also. Appropriately share your own feelings of uncertainty and helplessness. Knowing that these events are disconcerting to you will help your teen be more okay with how they are processing things.

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