

SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS DURING COVID-19

Biggest Challenge for Youth:

GRIEF caused by **LOSS** during **COVID-19**

Allowing Adolescents to Support their own Resilience

Recognizing that:

- Grief is a primary condition for everyone, individually and collectively
- As adults, we can't "fix it" for our adolescents
- They have experienced loss, and their feelings about it should be acknowledged
- Empathy is a powerful social medicine
- The grief process is not linear
- By helping youth recognize they are grieving, we affirm their emotions as normal, manageable, and, temporal

Losses Youth Suffer from the Pandemic

- Health
- Loved ones
- In-person contact with peers
- Social rituals
- Structure and Predictability
- Social/Cognitive stimulation
- Driving, Dating, Sports, Music, Arts
- Religious Gatherings
- Court Hearings
- Anticipatory losses = uncertainty about the future = *anxiety*

Stages of Grief

1. **Denial**
 - a. "This virus won't affect me"
2. **Anger**
 - a. "I can't see my friends, but I'm still surrounded by adults"
3. **Bargaining**
 - a. "If I stay home for a few weeks, we can get back to normal."
4. **Sadness**
 - a. "This will never end. Why me?"
5. **Acceptance**
 - a. "This is real for everybody, I've got to figure it out."
6. **Meaning**
 - a. "What have I learned about myself?"

Stress Management Tools

- **Suggest Yoga**
 - doyogawithme.com -- free classes at multiple levels
- **Suggest Mindfulness apps**
 - Happy Not Perfect, Headspace, Pacifica
- **Encourage Cognitive Supports**
 - Engaging online options over passive options like solitary video games/social media
 - Identify areas of passion, encourage content creation
- **Explain ANT Therapy: Autonomic Negative Thoughts**
 - 1. Be aware of negative thoughts
 - 2. Name negative thoughts
 - 3. Negate it with a positive thought
 - 4. Move on

Steps in Fostering Resilience in Adolescents :

1) Connect → 2) Converse → 3) Acknowledge → 4) Suggest → 5) Reassure

Step 1: Connect

- Find **platform** to connect
 - Video is best
 - Any connection is better than no connection
- Make meetings **regular** and **consistent**
 - show up even if adolescent does not

Step 2: Converse

- Refrain from "**problem solving**"
- Ask good questions
 - Ask **open ended** questions
 - Be **direct** if concerns arise
- Practice Active Listening
 - Nonjudgmental listening builds trust
 - Listening is more powerful than giving advice

Step 3: Acknowledge

- Acknowledge youth's feelings, it doesn't mean you have to agree with them
- Acknowledgement shows youth you will **not be judgmental** of their **feelings**
 - "I can understand how frustrated you are"
- **Empathic responding/listening**
 - "You feel ____ because/when _____"

Step 4: Suggest

- Make suggestions only when opportunity arises
- **Resist urge to "fix"** their problems or feelings
- "May I make a suggestion?"
- "You might consider _____"
- "If you'd like, I could share some resources or info about _____"

Step 5: Reassure

- Be receptive to contact efforts outside of scheduled time
- Consistently recognize and validate feelings
- Remind them that they have an open line of communication with you
- Reassure that you'll be there for them, and then *follow through*

Mentor Do's:

- Be **available** and **present**
- Allow adolescent to express as much unhappiness as they are willing
- Encourage **talking about loss** as much and as often as they want
- Encourage being **patient with themselves**
- Acknowledge problems, don't "fix" them

Mentor Don'ts:

- Don't let your **own grief** keep you from reaching out
- Don't say you "know how they feel"
- Don't tell adolescent **what they should be feeling**
- **Don't change subject** when they bring up loss

Source:

The Resilience Code for Adolescents: Adapting to COVID-19, presented by Frank Kros