

## Seven Pivotal Parenting Pillars to Support Teens During Covid-19 Lockdown

Although it's easy to imagine looking after little children might be the hardest situation to deal with in lockdown, many parents with teenage children are encountering unprecedented issues and parenting challenges.

The lockdown has robbed teens of so many rites of passage – from parties to end of term proms, the natural order of pushing boundaries and finding independence. They have a right to feel cheated, angry, frustrated and upset. In addition to that, they may also be experiencing feelings of loneliness and boredom.

So how can parents help support their teens through this?

1. The importance of acknowledging their feelings and the right for them to have these feelings of disappointment or anger or anxiety and be able to work through them with you is absolutely key. There is nothing you can do to change this situation, but you can help by letting them know that, given the unchangeable factors, they have your support and understanding.
2. Their natural development at this stage means they would normally be distancing from parents and becoming more reliant on friends and peers for social validation and approval. It may be that your teen is spending (significantly) more time than before on their phone. If they are communicating with friends this may well actually be no bad thing.
3. Zoning Out - Just as we may find the action of mindlessly scrolling through Facebook or Coronavirus-related memes or other frivolous web-surfing, teens may be watching far more mindless videos such as TikTok for exactly the same reason – to enjoy the benefits of feeling suspended in a chilled out zone.
4. Encourage teens to be creative with their social interaction. Whether it's playing games, singing together or calls with multiple friends on sites like Houseparty and Zoom these can all be beneficial in keeping your teenager's spirits up and feeling like they are being 'social'.
5. It's normal that teens push at boundaries – at the moment there's only one boundary and that's you, so be prepared to suck up a bit of angst. The kind of things they might blame you for or push back on are screen times, bed times, chores, clothing, hair dye and what tv or films they're allowed to watch. What you need to consider is where will they get their little wins from and where are you able to help them find these.
6. Be prepared to bend your rules – whatever rules you had before the lockdown, create a new or amended set of lockdown rules and show your teens that you understand this really is different.
7. Some things do remain the same. Picking your battles will always be important: eating healthily, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep are worth standing firm for. Consider your bargaining positions – for example could more screen time be allowed once exercise is done?