

CONVERSATION STARTERS:**1. How do you feel about COVID-19?**

It is important to know/try to understand the experience that your child is having surrounding the pandemic. Some young people may be concerned with their/loved ones' health and safety, what it means for their summer, or what it means for the fall, while others may not be overly concerned and going with the flow. We shouldn't assume what their experience is or even think that it is similar to our own or even their siblings. Giving them the opportunity to have a voice and share their experience can open up the line of communication and provide them with a safe space to share frustrations or concerns.

**2. What are your thoughts on the future and what your summer or school year might look like?
Are these thoughts causing you stress or anxiety?**

There have been a lot of changes to our traditional way of life due to COVID-19. Many young people have been faced with changes to school, activities, and even being able to socialize. Even though we are no longer under a quarantine, our summer has been impacted and the impact for the fall is still unknown. The unknown or unexpected can lead to fear, stress, and anxiety. Not knowing concrete plans for the fall can be frustrating for parents and children alike. When we have no control over a situation, often the best thing we can do is understand the potential possibilities while not obsessing or fixating on them. Thinking too much over the unknown and things out of our control, like what school will look like in the fall, can lead to anxious thoughts or feelings. If they express or show signs of being stressed or anxious, help your child to understand that they will be able to handle whatever the future holds and that you are there to support them. Sharing your own frustrations and concerns can make them feel like they are validated and not alone; however, be sure that you are keeping your stress or worry at manageable levels and not sharing too many negative feelings with your child without a positive outlook. If they need extra support for symptoms of anxiety or depression during this time, contact their pediatrician or a mental health professional.

3. What are some things you have been able to do with your friends or to stay connected?

It is important during a time when many typical activities or traditions are not possible to focus on the positives and what they CAN do. Young people can have virtual meet ups, participate in approved outdoor activities, and plan get-togethers that follow health and safety guidelines. Ask your child about what they have seen others do and help them come up with a few ideas for their summer so they have something positive to look forward to.

4. Is there anything I can do for you during this time?

While some kids may be used to the changes brought on by COVID-19, others may still be struggling to acclimate to the new normal. It is important to ask your child if there is anything you can do for them or a way you could better support them during this time. For young people who are struggling, having an open line of communication and extra support from loved ones can help. Some young people may get their primary support from friends instead of family at this age but it is important they are reassured that you are there for them if they need you and want to do what you can to make their experience better.

Overall, the most important part about talking to your child about COVID-19 is making sure that they are healthy physically and mentally. Learning about their experience, offering support, and staying positive are important in helping your young person manage the changes in their life. Continue to encourage healthy routines with exercise, sleep, and eating. Parents and guardians are role models on how to handle what life throws at us. Staying positive and using healthy coping skills to deal with stress and frustration will be the example for the young person in your life of what to do during this time.