

DAILY FLASH: OCTOBER 8, 2020

Mental Wellness—Children, Teens, and Mental Health

Demi Lovato: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXmveJHIG6g>

Depression and Anxiety in Teens:

Many of us have children and teenagers in your homes, or in our lives. As life becomes more complicated and competitive, the incidence of depression and anxiety in children and teens is on the rise. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 10 and 24 according to the Center for Disease Control. COVID is impacting the mental health of children and teens and magnifying symptoms of depression and anxiety due to disrupted routines, separation from friends, worry about the virus, and worry about at-risk family.

How to help children and teens during the pandemic:

- Plan safe ways for kids to engage socially: like a bike ride, a bonfire or a picnic where everyone brings their own food.
- Help them understand. Talk to kids about the spread of the virus in age appropriate ways that encourage caution, but do not cause anxiety or panic.
- Ask them for ways they can feel connected that have a low risk
- Limit screen time, and social media
- Ensure they get enough sleep and are eating healthy

With social distancing, and families spending more time at home, everyone is spending more time in front of the TV, or another screen. Excessive screen time can stress kids and teens. Work with kids to set reasonable expectations for screen time and ensure they get enough sleep. Make sure phones and tablets are put away at least an hour before bedtime.

Recognizing the signs of depression and anxiety in children and teens can mean getting them the help and support they need early. Look out for the following:

- Emotional changes, such as feelings of hopelessness or emptiness
- Trouble thinking or concentrating
- Changes in eating habits or weight
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Sudden withdrawal from friends or activities (even if only virtual).

If your child or teen makes any mention of suicide, take those words seriously and act immediately.

If your child or teen is hesitant to talk to a professional, try framing it as strength building or coaching, rather than fixing something that is broken. Professional athletes seek out coaches to build skills. Therapists help build skills needed in times of stress, or crisis.

Resources:

TALKSPACE: Talk Space is a benefit offered not only to you, but to your dependents over the age of 13. It is anonymous, so your teen can freely reach out for help without having to ask for help, or have you schedule or take them to an appointment. Please share this resource with them: www.talkspace.com/allanmyers

If your child under the age of 13 needs professional help, here are some things you can do:

- Speak with your pediatrician for a referral to a licensed psychologist or therapist. Many are taking appointments via FaceTime or Zoom to prevent the spread of COVID.
- Use the Health Advocate benefit provided by Allan Myers. This service will make phone calls to available providers and will ask questions like appointment availability, taking new patients, taking children as patients, etc. so you don't have to.
- Call the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) where your child can get 5 free therapy sessions over the phone, and referral to an ongoing therapist if needed.

If you have a topic of interest that you would like to include on this daily communication, please contact Samantha Krebsbach at Samantha.Krebsbach@allanmyers.com.