

## ***Parent Article: HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR OWN WELLBEING DURING CORONAVIRUS***



The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted all of our lives. Parenting a teenager can be challenging at the best times, but for some, this upheaval in our social, work and school life may make things even more difficult.

When you're trying to support your teen through all the changes, it's easy to forget about yourself. However, by prioritising your own wellbeing, you'll feel better and be more able to support your teen.

### **Pay Attention to the Basics:**

Prioritise your own self-care such as getting enough sleep, eating nutritious and regular meals and moving your body every day. If you're struggling with how to keep active when physically distancing, here are few suggestions:

- Yoga with Adrienne - is a well loved yoga channel. Adrienne is quirky and down to earth and offers yoga classes lasting from five minutes through to an hour.
- Nike Training Club - offers heaps of free workouts you can do from home, as well as wellness and nutrition guidance from experts.
- Seven - 7 Minute Workout app (IOS and Android). These are seven minute workouts are scientifically designed to provide the maximum benefit in the shortest amount of time.

**Remember** - Do whatever works for you!!

### **Do Things that Makes You Feel Good**

It might feel like you're in survival mode at the moment but doing things that feel good can help replenish your physical, mental and emotional energy. Try injecting something pleasurable into your regular daily routine, even if it's just of two minutes. Here are some ideas for things you can do by yourself or with other family members:

- By yourself - anything you regularly do for self-care, such as reading, listening to your favourite song or working on your car. If you don't have a regular routine reflect on something that you enjoy doing and make a start.
- With your family - maybe it's getting thrashed in video games by your teens, sitting down for a meal with no devices, or watching trashy TV together - anything that helps the family to de-stress together will make for a calmer household.

If you feel good, you'll be more engaged and more effective parent during these tough times!

## Put Boundaries in Place

Setting boundaries is important for both your and your teen's wellbeing. If the whole family is suddenly at home due to everyone's routines being disrupted, boundaries will become even more important.

Some examples of boundaries you might want to set may include:

- Times when you will each need your own space
- Where/when your teen is allowed to go out of the house at this time
- What kind of routine you expect your teen to follow
- Times when you'll be working/doing chores, and times when you are available to chat

Before you have a discussion with your teen - consider the following:

- What are the most important boundaries?
- What boundaries are negotiable, and which are not?
- What kinds of consequences are you comfortable with?

Have a think about how you expect your teen to behave, and the communicate this to them clearly and calmly. It may help to link these new rules to your family's values. For example: 'We're all staying home so that we can reduce Nanna's risk of contracting Covid-19.'

## Stay in Touch with Supports

Making time to connect with friends and family is essential for your wellbeing - we may be physically distant, but we don't have to be socially distant. Each day, ask yourself - 'Who am I checking in or connecting with today?' Make time for a cuppa or a meal with a family member you live with and use it as a special time for connection. If you're feeling overwhelmed by all the Covid-a9 talk, establish beforehand that you'll have a 'Covid-19 free zone' for that period of time.

It's also important to connect with people outside of the house, so try video chatting (eg. using Facetime, Zoom, Google Hangouts or Skype), calling or messaging a friend everyday or so. Tell them how you're going and check in with how they are, too.

## Don't try to be perfect

It's tempting to try and 'do it all' and keep everything running exactly as usual. But the reality is this is *not* a normal situation.

Put aside all non-essential tasks and give yourself a breather every now and then.

## Have a Plan if you're working from home

If you're now working from home, chances are you're facing a whole range of new challenges. Consider the following tips:

- Consider work priorities - what can be simplified, minimised or simply shelved
- Make a routine. Put the most important parts first: food, family, exercise. Priority one is a stable home environment and then add time slots for what you can reasonably achieve from your work priorities.

- Try to have a designated work spaces as much as possible so that when you're in that space, your teen will know you're 'at work'.
- Going fo a walk togetehr at lunchtime helps a lot to get out of the house and have some fresh air, exercise and chatting time.
- Have realistic expectations! Have relaxed screen time rules and emphasised that you know how important it is for them to stay in contact with their friends.
- Have an agreemen that time between 9 and 3 will be like a normal school day, and set phone alarms to go off at recess and lunchtime just like the bells do.
- Use headphones. If you are wearing them - it's a signal to your children to be respectful and not start up a conversation or make heaps of noise. When they're off, 'I'm open to conversation and questions.'
- Be realistic and kind to yourself. You can't achieve the same amount of work with the kids at home as you can when you are by yourself.

## Go easy on yourself

**Task** - You could try writing down 3 things you did well (or just did) each day.

### Reach out for Support

As we've never dealt with something like this before, it may feel overwhelming, even if you've been trying to take care of your wellbeing. As most people will be physically distancing or self-isolating, telephone and online services are great options.

Jump on to the [ReachOut Parents Forums](#) to connect safely with other parents and learn from them how they're managing the stress of parenting teens through this challenging time.

You can also access our ReachOut Parents free [One-on-One Support program](#) over the phone and online. You'll be able to connect with an experienced family professional who will listen, guide you through identifying your specific challenges, suggest practical strategies you can try and provide evidence-based resources.

- Lifeline (13 11 14)
- Parentline Victoria (13 22 89) from 8am to midnight - 7 days a week.
- eheadspace Family and Friends (1800 650 890) from 9am to 0100 - 7 days a week. Provides free online support and counselling to young people 12 - 25 and their **families and friends**  
<https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/connect-with-a-clinician/>

(Source: <https://parents.au.reachout.com/skills-to-build/wellbeing/things-to-try-wellbeing/how-to-maintain-your-own-wellbeing-during-coronavirus>)

**Cyndee Bautista**

(Adolescent Health Nurse -DET School Nursing Program)