



Parenting Teenagers during Covid-19 lockdown:

Young people will be finding this lockdown period particularly difficult, and parents may well be finding it tough to parent them appropriately.

Teenagers are naturally at the stage in their lives where they are growing away from their families. Friendship groups often become really important in the lives of our teens.

This lockdown has suddenly thrust young people back into their families and away from their friends, whether they want to be or not.

With the schools closed, young people are going to be cut off from the people they care most about at the moment- their friends.

The initial excitement about missing school, exams, homework is beginning to wear off now and the realization they are going to be also missing the summer term, sporting events, performances they've been practicing for, parties, proms, gatherings, end of exams fun and flirtations, is likely to be setting in.

On top of all that they have to spend time with their parents. At the very time they had begun to get a little more control over their lives, they find suddenly they have none.

So how can you help?

How to stay in touch with friends may well be uppermost in your teen's minds. Most teens will be used to socializing online with their friends and will have their preferred way, e.g. apps like Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, or gaming online using PlayStations and the like.

As parents you can help by ensuring your teen has what they need to be able to stay in touch with friends: phones, tablets, computers, and Wi-Fi. Also time and space.

A private space for them is ideal, maybe their bedroom or another room in the house where they won't be disturbed. Of course in some homes this is not possible. Talk to your teen about how you can maximize quiet space for them to speak to friends, maybe a rota for the 'quiet room'? Screen times can be relaxed, but of course other activities still need to happen!

You'll need a routine. Again talk to each other about how to organize your day. Involve them in decision making, giving them a little responsibility, maybe coming up with a rota for essential jobs like washing up, cooking, walking the dog. Create an atmosphere of 'we're all in this together' which will help them take responsibility.

We all need some structure at this time including your teen, however, give them a break, they don't have to up at 7 am to start the school day. Most online classes are starting a little later, so allow them to lie in a bit. Again agree with your teen how the day can be structured around parents working, sibling's activities and teen's school commitments, and importantly their socialising time.

Your teen will need to be taking responsibility for their self-care, e.g. eating well, sleeping enough, exercising, getting enough fresh air and sunshine and having good quality time with family. All these things need to be negotiated and included in some kind of daily schedule for the family. You can help here by modelling a good self-care regime.

Generally people feel much better if they are volunteering or helping others. Young people love to feel needed, so maybe think of ways they can be helpful, maybe shopping for an elderly neighbour? You can ensure they follow the distancing rules by making sure they understand them.

Everyone is experiencing this lockdown in different ways, its bringing up different emotions for us all and teens of course are no exception. Sadness at the losses they have to face up to is normal. It's important you acknowledge these feelings as being a normal response to what is happening; that their losses are not trivial, they are really important to them.

There will also be anxieties about their futures, about the virus and maybe the impact of their relatives becoming ill. It's important you talk to your teen about these feelings and concerns. Ensure they have the facts about the pandemic and not the scare stories or fake news we are seeing on social media. Model calm rational behaviour; this will help to calm your teen, and patience.

In summary: talk to your young people, include them in decision making, create enjoyable moments, exercise together, make music, sing, draw/paint, dance together.

Please see my website for lots of useful links to mental health awareness websites for teens and adults. www.clairecrawtecounselling.com