

**The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on
Young People and Strategies to Stay Positive**

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The pandemic has taken a toll on all of us, no matter our age, socioeconomic status, or background. Stressors such as financial strain, loneliness, and worrying about the impending threat of sickness all have a negative impact on our mental health. People may not realize the effect these stressors can have on young people compared to adults. Children rely on adults for almost everything and sometimes adults don't notice the problems they go through. Thus, children often do not receive the help they need. During the pandemic, suicide rates have risen as people feel trapped, isolated, and alone. It is important to take care of yourself and others and try to stay positive throughout these hard times by staying in touch with loved ones, participating in self-care, and monitoring your mental health.

The pandemic has without a doubt caused an immense impact on people of all ages. From financial burdens to sheltering in place everyone has been affected in some way. All of this stress can put strain on our mental health and even lead to negative mental health outcomes. This can especially affect young people. Young adults may experience loss of their jobs and have trouble making ends meet. Children may have nightmares and show anxiety (Singh et al., 2020). This may be because they are stuck at home all day and have no social contact with their peers and teachers (Singh et al., 2020). Distance learning may also take a toll. Some children may excel in a digital format, but others can have trouble keeping up with deadlines when left to their own devices virtually. Children who are underprivileged may not even have the resources to distance learn and are cut off from contact with their peers entirely (Singh et al., 2020). All this stress can take a toll on young people's mental health. Children especially have difficulty using mental health services such as therapy because of money, time, or the reluctance or negligence of parents (Nirmita, 2020). Young unemployed adults may lose their health insurance, and the

additional financial strain of being unemployed can make seeking professional help impossible. The negative mental health effects and the difficulty in finding treatment experienced by young people during the pandemic is responsible for an increase in suicide rates. According to the CDC, suicidal ideation had doubled during the pandemic, going from 4.3% in 2018 to 10.7% in recent months (“Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic”, 2020).

There are a variety of techniques people can use to stay mentally healthy during this pandemic. Many people feel lonely or isolated because of quarantine but it is possible to combat those negative feelings with safe socially distanced events. Going to church, club meetings and other gatherings is entirely possible to do safely with the right precautions (“Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19”, 2020). It is even possible to connect with a therapist virtually (“Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19”, 2020). Eating healthy and caring for your body promotes good mental health (“Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19”, 2020). Picking up a hobby can help people relax and take their minds off of things for a while (“Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19”, 2020). One example of this is people baking more during the pandemic, so much so it became difficult to find yeast in stores. It is important to maintain relationships during the pandemic, and calling friends, organizing zoom meetings, or even writing letters is a good way to keep in touch. Maintaining good mental health can help combat suicidal thoughts and a good support system can save lives.

Mental health professionals are available to help anyone suffering negative thoughts during the pandemic. They can also offer guidance to those who need help staying positive in these trying times. In a PBS interview, Dr. Joshua Gordon, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, offered several strategies to de-stress and stay positive (Stabley, 2020). He

recommended self-care, staying in touch with friends and family, and good mental health habits (Stabley, 2020). He also suggested that people “Focus on facts” and try to see the news in a new light (Stabley, 2020). One example of this would be thinking about a shot of a hospital you saw on the news as an indicator that people are getting better, not dying. As for me, I agree with Dr. Gordon and other sources such as the CDC. It is important to keep your spirits up by picking up new hobbies, learning new things, and keeping in touch with friends, as well as participating in other healthy habits.

In conclusion, there have been many effects on people of all ages due to the pandemic. Young people especially have been affected. Data shows that suicide rates have risen since the start of the pandemic. This is certainly due to the negative effects of isolation because of the pandemic. It is important to continue healthy habits through these tough times and to take care of yourself, as well as making sure others are okay. These practices can save lives. Mental health services are available for use virtually and safely. Other methods can also help mental health such as self-care and talking to loved ones. The pandemic has taken a toll on us all, but it is imperative that we try our best to stay positive through these tough times.

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