

Supporting youth mental health during COVID-19

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Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



Children and teens have been affected by COVID-19 differently than other groups. Social connections are very important during this phase of life, and since last spring, we've had to severely limit our connections to friends and loved ones.

Mental health has declined for many people and, as a trusted adult, it's important to check in with the youth in your life, and let them know that they are supported.



Do a daily school and mental health check-in:

Put down your phone, turn off the TV and other distractions, and give them your full attention.

School Check-in

Rather than asking, "How was your day," try some other questions, such as:

- What was the best/funniest/worst thing that happened today?
- Who would you like to get to know better in your class?
- What's one interesting/funny/weird thing you learned today?
- Was there a time today when you were especially confused? How did you respond?
- Did you help anyone today? Did anyone help you?
- If you got to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you do?



Encourage your child to turn on their camera during school.

It's important for peers and teachers to be able to see each other. It enforces those interpersonal connections.

Ask questions like:

Mental Health Check-In



People can be angry, sad, or worried when something bad happens. Those feelings can make you feel confused or uncomfortable. Tell me what you have been feeling since the changes started.



When our minds are stuck on bad things, it can be really hard to focus on other things. Have you ever felt this way? What kinds of things does your mind get stuck on?



Is there anything that you are looking forward to, for when we can connect in-person more safely and return to more normal activities—like a vacation, movie, graduation or playing a sport? Tell me about what that might look like!



- Follow their lead, listen attentively, and reassure them that it's ok not to feel ok right now.
- Notice negative changes in your child's moods, energy level, or eating or sleeping habits. These can be signs of declining mental health.

There are many resources available for youth who need extra support, or are facing a mental health crisis.

- **Your child's school counselor** is available to offer mental health assistance, and can help with referrals for mental health services, connect with teachers, and answer questions about managing stress and school.
- **Compass Mobile Crisis Outreach Team** is available at 1-800-584-3578.
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) has a list of mental health resources.