

How Teens can Manage Anxiety Over the Coronavirus Outbreak

Tips by stem4 CEO Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist

Many teenagers are experiencing anxiety about getting and passing on the Coronavirus. Anxiety is an uncomfortable emotion but it can also be helpful in making sure we take steps to protect ourselves. Rather than focussing on the discomfort created by experiencing anxiety, Dr Nihara Krause encourages young people to use its warning function to take some of the steps below:

- Focus on the facts rather than on any 'catastrophic' thoughts you may have. The health risk of Coronavirus is very low for most teens. Understand that you can effectively reduce the risk of passing it on to loved ones by washing your hands with soap and water.
- Aim for a balance in safety behaviours. Though it is not effective to ignore activities (such as handwashing), over doing anything traps you in a negative spiral.
- Aim to get adequate rest. This might be by listening to your favourite playlist, playing with a pet or just chilling with someone you like. Sleep is important for maintaining positive mental health.
- Use the 'Take Five' technique when you feel physical symptoms of anxiety, such as a racing heart. Stretch out your hand and trace your thumb with a finger from the other hand. Breathe in as you move upwards and breathe out as you move downwards on the inner side of your thumb. Repeat for each finger.



- Minimise what you watch on the news and what you read on social media. Remember that news needs to be repeated so everyone can access it, but repetition can make someone on the receiving end feel overwhelmed.
- Make a list of fun plans that you could do, ensuring some of them include things you can do on your own - in case you have to have a break from others. Examples include playing a board game, creating your own quiz, arranging your photos in albums, or making a storyboard.
- Eat well and regularly. We use more energy when we are anxious.
- Be honest about 'trigger' activities (for example, being bored) and make sure that you have a list of things you can do to protect yourself.
- Remember, parents get anxious too but that doesn't mean the world is unsafe – it just means that they may need to read and apply some of these tips too!

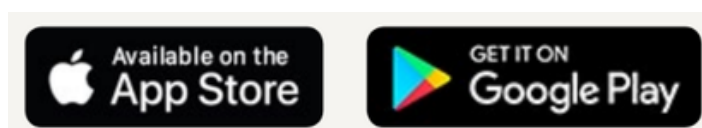


CLEAR FEAR



COMBINED MINDS

stem4 also provides clinically developed mental health apps that can be accessed anywhere for free. Clear Fear has a range of techniques to help teens manage anxiety whilst Combined Minds helps parents and friends support someone who is anxious. They are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and a Strengths-Based Approach respectively and are available to download now from both Google Play and the App Store.



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