

Parenting Article #6-

Teens and COVID-19 (Part-1)

Teenagers are being impacted by COVID-19 in many, many ways. Most rites-of-passage have been canceled or postponed and this can add a lot of stress and anxiety to an already stressful time. According to the National Institute of Health ([nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know/](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know/), 2020), the teenage brain is still growing and maturing (this can last into the late 20's). Because the part of the brain that is responsible for impulse control and "thinking things through" is the last to develop, teens are more likely to participate in risk taking behaviors (getting together with friends during a stay-at-home order). Teens are also more vulnerable to experiencing mental health problems as a result of their changing brains paired with all the other stresses of adolescence (emotions, social connections). Anxiety and depression can develop in some young people, so be aware of the signs and symptoms:

- Changes in their typical behaviors, trouble sleeping, digestive problems
- Crying for no reason
- Feeling hopeless and empty
- Irritability
- Lost of interest in usual activities (no longer wanting to connect with friends)
- Fixation on past failures
- Trouble concentrating, excessive worry
- Frequent thoughts of death, dying, or suicide
- Lack of energy
- Anger outbursts, agitation
- Self-harm (cutting, burning)

Some of these things can also be part of a typical teen experience, so it's important to seek help if these warning signs start to interfere with their daily life or are a concern about safety (suicidal thoughts).

Ways to get help:

1. Call your doctor or mental health provider (Centra Wellness Network – 1-877-398-2013)
2. Call a suicide hotline. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
3. Call 911 for immediate concerns of safety
4. Reach out to friends and family for support
5. Let your young person know you are concerned. Engage them as much as possible in getting help. Don't use shame or guilt to get them help.

([Mayoclinic.org/teendepressionand anxiety](https://www.mayoclinic.org/teendepressionand anxiety)).

Manistee Substance, Education, & Awareness (SEA) Coalition was started in 2016, formed as a work group of the Human Services Collaborative Body (HSCB). The SEA uses the Communities That Care framework that looks at local data to determine priorities for programs in our community. For more information you can visit www.communitiesthatcare.net. The SEA is funded with Public Act 2 (Liquor Tax Funds) through the Northern Michigan Regional Entity. Sarah Garthe is the program facilitator of the SEA and is a Certified Prevention Specialist. Anyone in the community can join the SEA Coalition, please send an email to Sarah Garthe @ sgarthe@centrawellness.org for more information.