

Parenting Article #7 (Part-Two: Teens, Parenting, and COVID-19).

Parenting teens during COVID-19 parenting teens in general, can be a balancing act. We as adults who are raising teens, are always balancing how to help them “learn to adult” with setting clear expectations. This is part-two of parenting and COVID-19. Last week I talked about teens and mental health. This week we will focus on what a recent New York Times article quoted (and I personally love this term) “Quaranteenagers”. I must admit, I feel like us adults at times are not far from this label as well. I wish I could take credit for what I am about to share, but I must give Lisa Damour (2020) of the NYT props.

Since nearly every momentous event for an American teen has been canceled, (Prom, graduation, senior trips, getting together with friends in person), times have been rough for our kids. By nature of their developmental stage, teens want and need their peers. Here are some tips that Lisa (2020) shares for parents:

- Make space for feeling sad and disappointed. Empathize with your teen around this. It really does “suck” and it’s not fair.
- Remember some teens really struggle with school and peers, so they alternately may feel relief or even be happy they don’t have to participate in some of those rituals. This is normal as well.
- There is going to be frustration and anger about not being able to see their friends- so keep your focus on the facts, blame the experts, and offer alternative ways to “hang out”. Perhaps a virtual pizza party, a social distancing outdoor get together where everyone is 6 feet apart, etc. (good sources of information include the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization).
- Give your teen space! Allow them to be alone, hold their space/bedroom/ as sacred. They need retreat as much as we do.
- Whenever possible, include teens in your planning, problem solving, etc. They want to be included and know their voice matters.
- Give them something to look forward to, plan out what future get togethers with friends can be. At our house, we hope to host a “teen” night – outdoor games, bonfire, pizza. Since many events continue to be canceled for the summer, create some special space for your teen (this was my personal addition).

(Damour, L. 2020. Quaranteenagers: Strategies for Parenting in Close Quarters. New York Times, March 19).

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.