



# Student Mental Health During COVID

## a Conversation with Counselors

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We know that our students are experiencing stress from many different challenges this year; school closure, social justice issues, politics, the pandemic, and all of the health, social isolation, and economic challenges this creates for families. This guide is geared toward middle and high school students but could apply to younger children.



### According to the Washington State Department of Health:

“Almost 30% of parents are experiencing negative mood and poor sleep quality, with a 122% increase in reported work disruption and 86% of families experiencing hardships, such as loss of income, job loss, increased caregiving burden, and household illness. Families experiencing hardship are also reporting navigating their child’s disruptive or uncooperative behavior and anxiety.”

### Behaviors kids may exhibit because of these challenges include:

- Anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation
- Pandemic Apathy is general exhaustion about the pandemic. On the one hand, this might look like acting out, maybe refusing to follow guidelines. On the other hand, it might look like “acting in” and losing interest in friends and family, feeling hopeless, not engaging in self-care and taking care of hygiene, and some of the healthy connections we can still be involved in.
- General exhaustion
- Cognitive disruptions in the form of difficulty organizing, planning, remembering and paying attention, and overreacting emotionally.
- Substance Use or Abuse

### Other behaviors from children at this time include (these are “normal” responses to stress and are developmentally appropriate):

- Weirdness
- Changes in routines and patterns. Naturally, sleep patterns might be different and look more like the weekends/summer throughout the whole week.
- Moodiness – feeling a mixture of emotions
- Isolation – it's a lot of “together time”
- Changes in appearance – within reason
- Changes in friends and socialization patterns
- Lack of responses from your student. When you ask them, “What’s wrong?” they might not answer or know. This is developmentally appropriate.

**What are some typical concerns you are hearing from parents?** My kids are always on social media/computer | I don’t know what my kid is doing all day | I can’t be with them all the time to make sure they are doing schoolwork | They are falling behind in schoolwork | My kid isn’t getting the chance to socialize

### What can parents do at home to help?



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Model self-care | Keep predictable routines and schedules as much as possible | Support social interactions | Monitor social media | Practice being flexible | Develop a sense of purpose | Focus on hope

### What signs signal parents should seek help for their child?

- Distinct changes in hygiene/self-care
- Any talk or mention of self-harm, “I don’t want to be here anymore”
- Significant changes in eating patterns
- Significant changes to sleep, not sleeping at all or not waking up
- Significant risk-taking behaviors (running away, drugs and alcohol use, unhealthy coping, violence, etc.)

### What steps should parents take if they are worried about their child’s mental health?

- Contact your school counselor or pediatrician for referrals or advice.
- Talk to your student openly about your concerns. Gather information from them about their feelings and their perceptions. Avoid shame and blame. Let them know you are worried and want to help. Sometimes parents don’t have all the answers so reaching out to professionals is needed. Don’t blindside your student by scheduling appointments for them without their knowledge
- You can also contact mental health providers directly
  - Private Insurance – Search **Psychology Today** or call your insurance for a list of providers  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>
  - State Insurance – Compass, Seamar & CCS

### Crisis Support

Washington Listens (833-681-0211) is a hotline for people experiencing stress due to COVID-19

Health Care Authority – [Washington Mental Health Crisis Services](#)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (English) or 1-888-628-9454 (Español)

VOA Crisis Line (Snohomish County) Call 1-800-584-3578, or visit [www.imhurting.org](http://www.imhurting.org) for more information and a “Chat” feature

Crisis Connections: Call 866-427-4747

Crisis Text Line: Text HEAL to 741741

TeenLink: Call or text 866-833-6546.

### Other Resources

- NAMI Snohomish County: National Alliance on Mental Health <https://namisnohomishcounty.org/>
- Second Step Family Resources for COVID-19: [Winter Well-Being Video Series](#) | [SEL Passport for Grades K-5](#) | [ParenTeen Connect](#) | [Little Children, Big Challenges](#)
- [Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families: Supporting Children and Teens During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(download pdf\)](#)