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YOUR TEEN

for parents

PANDEMIC PARENTING 2.0

Navigating the Next Phase

Coping with New Stressors

Kitchen Adventures

College Questions? We've Got Answers

Summer Solutions—Help Is on the Way!

Beyond Board Games New Ideas for Fun

SPECIAL
COVID-19 ISSUE 2.0
Vol. 13 Issue 6
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Dear Readers,

Here we are, months into this strange new reality. I know we're feeling some fatigue. Are you? We're sick of online learning. Sick of missing friends. Sick of wearing masks (yes, already, and we've barely been out and about). Sick of bickering. Sick of chores. (That'd be my kids, realizing the downside of being home and being available for parent assignments all the time ...)

But we aren't SICK. When it comes to the coronavirus, we're supposed to be grateful for how healthy we are. And we are, for sure. We are so, so lucky. For so many others, there is the all-too-real grief of losing someone they love. Even if you haven't lost a friend or family member, that doesn't mean you aren't navigating other losses or still trying to adjust to the unsteady feeling of uncertain futures. There's still boredom. And teen rebellion. Peer issues. Anxieties. Financial loss. And even that unable-to-be-satisfied desire to plan your calendar for summer and fall.

In this weird in-between time, *Your Teen* is working to help us all navigate this day-to-day stuff. At our house, with three kids each graduating from one school and entering another in 2020, we're thinking a lot about missed milestones (page 64) and what's coming this fall (page 42). Meanwhile, we're looking for things to do, especially with a whole summer stretching out in front of us without the usual summer jobs, camps, and get-togethers. I love the ideas in this issue—from the clever solutions of teens

themselves (page 7) to the online games that I'm definitely going to try with my friends and family (page 22).

We're talking about all the other questions on our minds, too. How are we going to fill this summer? (page 29) What about my own anxieties? (page 8) What about college? (page 46) Questions, questions, questions—that's all there seem to be right now. In the face of this overwhelming uncertainty, one of my favorite bits of wisdom in this issue comes from author and counselor Phyllis Fagell. Don't miss what she has to say about uncertain times and how they might actually benefit our kids in the long run (page 12).

Yes, there's still plenty of hope for the future. We won't be stuck forever. And whether we're in the we-can-do-it short run or the whew-we-made-it long run, *Your Teen* will be here with you, supporting each other and figuring it all out together.


Stay safe and, as always, let us know what's on your mind at editor@yourteenmag.com.

Stay safe,








Praise for our first edition of *Parenting in a Pandemic...*


 As if raising teens isn't challenging enough!? This is a great resource!! More tools in the parenting toolbelt, #ParentingPandemicStyle
—Lori Marie Cuene


 Another great magazine for parents of teens, and it's absolutely free!
—BrainAbility


 This is a great resource!
—Carilion Adolescent Health

 Lots of super useful articles and information for parents of teens in here.
—Madeleine Woolgar: Mums Who Thrive

 Thanks so much for publishing this magazine. I am a parent of boy-girl twins who are almost 14. There was so much information and I'm enjoying reading all the tips. Thanks so much!
—Heather Wood, via email

 Many helpful #pandemicparenting resources here! Thank you @sharon_holbrook and @SusanBorison and the whole crew at @YourTeenMag!
—@DevorahHeitner, via Twitter

 Thank you, came just at the right time.
—Mariatim Hadd, via Facebook

 Another silver lining of these corona days: I love the new *Your Teen* for Parents interviews by Sue Borison on Facebook. I have found them to be practical and helpful and a perfect length. Kudos again to *Your Teen* for helping parents of teens in all of our challenges, especially in times of true crisis.
—Rachel Weiser, via email



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Share an unusual or fun way you've passed the time as a way of coping during quarantine.

I love music, and I've been taking advantage of being home by picking up an old keyboard. I had never used it and decided to attempt to learn to play it. I began with putting masking tape on all the keys to label them with the notes. Believe it or not, I can play a couple of songs now! I'm trying to take it a step further and write some songs (or I am at least trying to do so). It is great to have this time to explore and try to learn new things. It is a stress reliever and a great way to stay positive.

—*Paulina Chávez is a 17-year-old Mexican-American actress and musician from El Paso, TX who stars in Netflix's original show "The Expanding Universe of Ashley Garcia."*

My friends and I started having weekly Zoom meetings with a specific theme or activity for each call—like eating lunch together, playing games, or celebrating Christmas in April. For one of our upcoming calls, we are all considering buying the same boxed brownie mix and baking together on the Zoom call to see who can do the best job.

—*Katie, Cincinnati, OH*

When someone is sequestered, they start to discover new things. For me, that was poetry. I've always admired poetry and its intricacies, but I never began creating it myself until now. From the comforts of my home, I am able to bask in the sun's warmth, gleam in the moon's glow, and delve into memories as I craft poetry from the sounds and sights in front of me. Honestly, hours just fly by, and my thoughts about the pandemic ordeal just float away.

—*Saharsh, Collierville, TN*

My family came up with the idea of creating our own Quarantine Olympics! We each planned a game or some type of event, and when Olympics day came, we played them all. We also shared this idea with extended family who joined in by giving ideas and playing some of the same games we did.

—*Adaline, Detroit, MI*

Right before the coronavirus started to be a serious issue in New York, my mom and I made the decision to move to Vermont. We are living at a lake house about 40 miles from Canada until July! Since we are in quarantine and staying away from any form of contact, I've taken on a few hobbies. I bought a guitar and have been

trying to teach myself, along with using Logic Pro X software to make music. I've also been bike riding for more exercise, and pretty soon, I will be kayaking in my backyard. Although it'll be nice to get back to my old lifestyle in the busy city of New York, I am trying to make the best of my situation and stay safe during the crisis.

—*Liliana, Brooklyn, NY*

I asked my mom to watch one of my favorite anime series. She liked it!

—*August, Milwaukee, WI*

During quarantine, I have a newfound passion for exercising and working out, especially through yoga. Luckily, several companies have been providing free yoga classes on YouTube and other apps for both beginners and pros. Learning yoga has been a super-fun and easy way to cope during quarantine.

—*Lily, Parkland, FL*

After playing video games for so long with my friends, we started to get bored with both the repetitive nature and boundaries of our favorite games. While re-watching "Stranger Things" during the quarantine, I noticed the game Dungeons and Dragons that played a huge role in the show and realized that it would be the perfect game for me and my friends to mix things up during lockdown. So we're setting up the game and learning all the rules and how to make the characters. As we learn more about the game, our interest and excitement increases. Now, instead of watching the adventures unfold, we get to have our own.

—*Jack, Cincinnati, OH*



COPING

My Teen with Anxiety Is Helping Me Handle the Pandemic

I fell onto the couch beside my 13-year-old daughter. There was a tightness in my chest and I felt jittery, like there was too much adrenaline in my veins.

I knew that I wasn't suffering from COVID-19, but my body was feeling the effects of being anxious about COVID-19.

Like so many others, I had suddenly been told to work from home. My two teens were home as well, their schools closed indefinitely. My days were spent trying to work via videoconference while thoughts and worries about the pandemic peppered my mind.

Do I have enough food if we are ordered to stay home?

Should I get more toilet paper?

Why aren't my parents answering my texts?

Thank goodness my kids are teenagers and can entertain themselves. Wait, what WAS that loud crash?

As I sat on the couch next to my daughter, I did what I was probably not supposed to do: I told her about my anxiety.

"I can't turn these thoughts off," I said. "Is this what it's like to have anxiety?"

"Exactly," she replied in a calm voice.

My teen was diagnosed with generalized anxiety in the fourth grade when she was 10 years old.

Now in the 7th grade, she manages her

anxiety with biweekly therapy sessions and a host of cognitive behavior skills learned over the last three years.

Perhaps the most important thing she and her doctor have taught me about anxiety is that she can't turn off her anxious thoughts.

They will always be there. Yet with therapy and practice my daughter has learned how to manage them.

And now here I was, unable to turn off my worries about the pandemic we are facing. So I asked her to share her hard-earned expertise to help me with my anxiety. My hope is that these strategies help not just me, but perhaps help others, as well, during these uneasy times.

Journal

"It helps get your worries and other emotions out," my teen says of journaling. Writing releases your thoughts from inside your mind. Keeping a journal, whether daily or weekly, allows you to see and organize your thoughts, rather than try to make sense of them in your head.

My daughter recommends journaling in private and keeping what you write to yourself, making it a true safe space to share your thoughts.

Play an instrument or sing

"Music gets your mind to focus on something other than the worries," my teen commented. She enjoys strumming the ukulele.

Indeed, we have all seen the videos of people in quarantine in Italy, singing or playing instruments from their balconies. Doing that boosts their mood and allows time away from their worries.

It doesn't matter if you are good at making music, either. For my daughter, playing and singing means joyful self-expression rath-

er than perfect performance. She has never been interested in posting her songs online, rather she sings for pure pleasure.

Exercise

Exercise almost always makes my daughter feel physically better and less anxious.

It can be any kind of exercise, too. My daughter likes ice hockey, which is fast, skilled, and physical. When her team's playoffs got canceled due to the virus, though, she turned to yoga. She has bookmarked several of her favorite YouTube videos and says the feel-good flow makes her more relaxed and calm.

Ignore it

"Honestly, Mom, I've gotten really good at ignoring my anxiety," my daughter relayed.

And as I thought of her journey with anxiety, I've realized that she's right. She ignores her anxious thoughts when she plays her ukulele. Or when she sings. She doesn't pay any attention to those thoughts when she loses herself to exercise.

And for me? The best way I can ignore my coronavirus anxiety is to limit how much TV I watch and how much time I spend looking at my phone and computer. Instead, I can go for a walk. Or sing (badly) to my favorite '80s songs. I should definitely snuggle on the couch more with my teens while we watch a silly show.

"You know, I feel better just talking to you," I told my daughter as I hugged her. "I think I'll go for a long walk now."

"Good job, Mom," she said and smiled. "Good job."

Katy M. Clark is a writer who embraces her imperfections as a mom at Experienced Bad Mom. You can follow her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Instagram](#).

Why I'm Not Helping My High School Teens with Online Learning



Here we are, weeks into social distancing, and we have become pros at our new lifestyle. I'm certain my teens could earn gold medals if "eating all of the quarantine snacks like it's their job" were an Olympic sport.

In the first few weeks of social distancing, I didn't push my teens to do anything remotely educational. Our school district has never built a true spring break into our yearly calendar so when our governor announced that schools would close to aid with social distancing, I figured there was no time like the present to let my teens indulge in some good old-fashioned laziness.

As event after event was canceled before our eyes, my teens got down to the business of bingeing—both on Netflix and every conceivable morsel in our pantry.

By week two, we'd developed some semblance of a schedule that looked vaguely like our summer life, albeit without the chaos of summer jobs, social outings with friends, and day trips to the beach. My husband and I adjusted to the realities of working from home indefinitely, and our kids quickly adjusted to living like blobs on the couch for hours on end.

To my amazement, while they did do their fair share of TV watching, they also seemed to pick up their favorite books

without prompting. My daughter broke out her paints for the first time in months. My son changed the oil on his car. Sometimes, they'd just sit and chat in the family room about nothing and everything.

For the first time ever, my teens were learning what it meant to just "be."

We did puzzles.

We played rounds and rounds of very bad basketball in our driveway.

We cried our eyes out as a family while watching *Onward*.

We never mentioned schoolwork, grades, or online learning until our district administrators came up with a distance learning curriculum.

Week three brought a new kind of first day of school: Online classes would be their norm for the foreseeable future. Both teens smiled grudgingly from their desk chairs as I documented the moment for Facebook.

They dove into their work and I haven't brought online learning up since. I mean, I'm assuming they are doing their assignments as evidenced by the fact that I hear howls of annoyance coming from their bedrooms when Schoology is temporarily down.

But as far as checking in with them to make sure they've turned in their assignments? Nope. Have I asked them what they've learned so far? Also, nope.

I know, Parent of the Year over here, right?

The simple fact is this: I have no idea how to help them with their homework and assignments.

I have a junior who is taking Calculus. I am by no means qualified to help him navigate numbers on imaginary graphs I don't understand. I firmly subscribe to the "Go ask your father" method when it comes to math homeschooling.

You need help with your graphic design class? Sorry, kiddo, I learned to type on an actual typewriter.

You can't translate your French homework? Lo siento, pero hablo Espanol solamente.

Hey, kids? Unless it involves copy editing an English essay or assistance with an anatomy dissection (which we are not doing during remote learning, thanks very much), you are on your own during this very weird time in your education.

Basically, I'm letting everyone off the hook around here. This time is stressful enough without having a mother breathing down your neck about a history assignment, and I am not going to be that mom to my kids. It is enough work to make sure that our family stays safe and secure during uncertain times. Wasting energy on whether my kid makes it to every school Zoom call is not how I need to spend my time.

I know my kids are trying their hardest during a crisis that no one ever thought would be a part of our history. They are doing the hard work of simply showing up and trying to wade through a confusing time.

And I'm letting the teachers off the hook, too. I see my teacher friends posting "We miss you" videos to their students and I know that we are all at our virtual limits with Zoom calls, online assignments, and virtual projects.

I've been a parent long enough to know that book learning will only take kids so far.

The lessons my kids are learning about patience and compassion for their community will serve them much longer than memorizing history dates. They are now a part of a generation of kids who have watched a pandemic unfold, so I'm feeling pretty confident that their biology and epidemiology course requirements are more than fulfilled.

The kids will be okay. And we will be too, parents.

When my kids look back on the time we spent at home because of the novel coronavirus, I want them to remember that their small actions made a big impact on the world around them. I want them to remember that sheltering in place wasn't a punishment so much as a reset. I want them to remember the moment they understood what it means to hope.

And I want them to do better for the rest of their lives, based on what they are learning during these few short months.

I'd also like them to remember that we used a hell of a lot less toilet paper than we expected, too.

Christine Burke started the popular parenting blog [Keeper of The Fruit Loops](#) six years ago on a whim. Since then, her work has been featured on the Today Show, Scary Mommy, Grown and Flown and other parenting websites. In her spare time, she runs marathons, collects thrift shop finds, and eats ice cream like it's her job.



Q & A with Phyllis Fagell

Like you, we have so many questions about guiding our kids through this unprecedented time. To get some expert guidance on those tricky middle school years, *Your Teen* recently chatted with Phyllis Fagell, school counselor, psychotherapist, journalist, mom of three, and author of *Middle School Matters*. Following is an excerpt adapted from our conversation.

Here's a question we are hearing a lot. What if my 12-year-old boy has always been very social, but during quarantine, he hasn't been keeping in touch with anyone?

I have been getting that question all the time. And my observation is that, as both a school counselor and a parent, kids in this age group, boys in particular, may have very different social needs than we might expect them to have. And they actually might be fine waiting until they can engage in person. A lot of them don't have the skills to interact virtually with friends who, at this point, they probably haven't seen in several months. And they're used to interacting in a much more physical way, so this is not organic or natural. I actually think we're likely to do more harm than good if we really sit on them to socialize with others, particularly if they're not unhappy. Because what they'll internalize is that we're disappointed in them or that we think they're lacking in some way—and we may inadvertently end up compounding their stress. There are less onerous ways to help them socialize, if you have access to online games like an Xbox Live. I found that tween boys are having an easier time interacting through activities like that. I know several parents who said, "I finally caved, and I got the Xbox." And I would put myself in that category as well. Also, think

back to when they were younger and did parallel play—being next to each other without interacting. Finding a way to approximate that now might be that they're both baking cookies at the same time, or they're watching the same movie at the same time, but they don't have that burden of conversation.

How do we deal with kids' disappointment about missing special events? And our own disappointment, by the way?

I can completely relate to that. I have a senior in high school myself, so I vicariously am experiencing that. And I think as parents, that's how we're wired. We want to shield our child from all disappointment, we want to shield them from sadness.

The most encouraging thing I can say along those lines is that the research actually shows that kids who are forced to endure periods of uncertainty are more likely to have greater flexibility, satisfaction and gratitude later in life. They are acquiring so many skills that they would not acquire in the school setting that will serve them during other challenging points in their life when they experience other kinds of adversity. So as hard as it is, there is a silver lining.

VIDEO: Watch the full interview with Phyllis Fagell

Parenting Defiant Teens

Interview with
Dr. Neil Bernstein

While parenting a defiant teen is challenging during the best of times, it can be especially difficult now, as we are all trying to get our teens to adhere to social distancing rules for safety. As some states begin to ease those restrictions, this job is likely to get harder, not easier; teens will naturally want to spend time with friends, and may push the boundaries or defy your family's rules about who they can see, having to wear a mask, or staying six feet apart, for example. For advice on how to navigate this unusual time, we turned to Neil Bernstein Ph.D., adolescent psychologist and author of *How to Keep Your Teenager Out of Trouble and What to Do If You Can't*.



Some teens are just ignoring the restrictions on socializing. Why aren't they listening?

Teenagers are allergic to control. The more we force them to do something, the more they do the opposite. Why are they allergic to control? Sometimes they feel the parents are control freaks, and they feel compelled to say white if we say black and vice versa. In some cases, peer pressure can fuel defiance. Believe it or not, a little bit of genetics is mixed in. Kids are born

and raised with different personalities, and it's not a one-size-fits-all thing.

So what do we do?

If your kid has control issues or defiance issues, the last thing that's going to work is to say, "Because I said so." That's just fueling the resistance. So, we start out by validating their concerns. "I know it makes you angry when I tell you what to do. I would like to hear your thoughts as well." You don't stoop to their level in an argument. You try to keep it rational. You tell them what you think is important, that want to hear them out, and you would like the same courtesy for them to hear what you are saying.

And it's useful to say to your kid, "I really don't want to control you. What I really want is for you to control yourself. And you know something, if you control yourself, I will be able to chill out and step back and trust you. That's up to you." If you want to make it work, you want the teen to feel respected and not controlled.

Does there have to be a bottom line sometimes—particularly with a health and safety issue like this pandemic?

Absolutely. Yes. But this is important: That bottom line must be enforceable. One of the worst things a parent can do is make threats and punishments that are not going to happen because the kid learns to ignore it. We want our kids to take us seriously. That means being able to state your expectations clearly and, most importantly, to have realistic, natural consequences.

Say I have a kid who is likely to break the rules even if I draw a hard line. That will expose my family and others to health risks. Should I negotiate with my teenager?

You can say to the child, "We can't force you to do this. We can't bind and gag you. But if

you're going to be a part of the family right now, you've got to go along with what we're all going along with."

Now, in some cases, maybe you can cut a deal. You might have to negotiate a connection with one friend, because that's better than all their friends. If the friend is healthy and, better yet, if you know the parents, you can make a decision together. It's a process.

Sometimes you can use bribery or incentives. And sometimes you can just say, "Look, this is important to us. Even if you feel you don't want to do it, if you do this for us, when you ask us to do A, B, or C—like get tickets for a certain concert—we'll cut you slack in a couple of months whenever this is over."

The more strong-willed and defiant the child is, the less likely it is that threats will work. They like deals. A lot of the kids love to bargain. And sometimes we have to use that to our advantage.

It's true that every characteristic has a negative and a positive side to it. For the kid who is defiant, how can you reframe it for parents and help us see something beautiful in that?

Being strong will serve you well in life, if you have determination when you find something you believe in or something you want. But we also have to have cognitive flexibility, which is the opposite of cognitive rigidity. That means the ability to look at both sides of an argument or issue and be able to process that and come to the best, healthiest decision for yourself.

Interview by Susan Borison

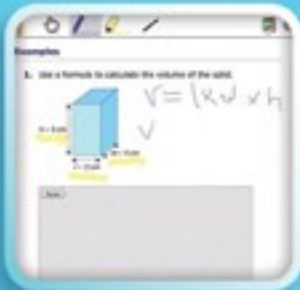


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Avoiding Learning Loss for Middle School Students

Many families are struggling with online learning. We turned to an expert for tried-and-true strategies to keep middle schoolers on track.

After several months of online schooling, many parents are concerned about whether their middle schooler is on track for the learning to come, particularly as their students ramp up to face tougher subject matter. Algebra. Dickens. High school. Help!

To talk us off the ledge, we spoke with Emily Levitt, vice president of education at Sylvan Learning, which provides academic support for students. She shared her expertise about how to keep middle school students on track and when to consider outsourcing to get extra help.

Usually, we worry most about learning loss during the summer. How have the last few months impacted that conversation?

There is the usual summer slide, when we have all that time off, but now we also have the COVID slide; so now we've got one giant slide.

What can parents do to motivate kids who do not want to do online learning?

Build in time for a lot of breaks. Pay attention for early signs of burnout. There are only



so many hours a day you can sit in front of a computer. The goal is for kids to pace themselves so they don't get overwhelmed. We have to take every day in bite-sized pieces.

How can parents help with that?

It's a perfect time to work with your kid to figure out a meaningful schedule for their day. The switch from elementary school to middle school leaves them in the lurch because they're expected to be more organized and handle time management more independently than in the past. In normal times, this transition is tricky but in these extraordinary circumstances, our kids will need more support. But they should definitely have input; that will get their buy-in.



From Your Teen for **Sylvan Learning**, whose expert teachers can help keep your child learning and growing this summer. Learn more at [sylvanlearning.com](https://www.sylvanlearning.com).

How can we create an environment for kids to stay focused?

Have a dedicated place for schooling. Make sure it's free from as many distractions as possible, which can be tricky depending on how many people are in the home. Have all the materials and Wi-Fi access available so when they sit down, they can focus on what they should be doing.

What's a reasonable amount of time for them to be sitting?

After an hour, have them get up and move around. More than that amount of time in front of a screen fosters burnout. I think we forget that kids are at school six or more hours a day, but they're not sitting at a desk working all day. They have a lot of breaks and variety.

What should the relationship between the parent and school look like?

Stay in contact as much as possible. If your kid is really stuck, ask the teacher. They can come up with really good strategies or alternatives if your child isn't going along with the original game plan.

If we don't want to duke it out with our kid to do online school, what else can we have them do?

Reading is always valuable. Reading anything. The more you do, the better you get. The same is true with writing. With nicer weather, have them get outdoors. There is so much to do. It's a great place for science lessons or they can just go read under a tree. Give them choices. Maybe offer them four learning options. I call it limited freedom. The silver lining here is we can really slow down and go outside and look around in the backyard.

Do you have a favorite assignment?

I'm a language arts teacher, and I always had my students invent a theme restaurant. They used descriptive language for the name and

then had to create each of the menu items. I also made it multi-disciplinary, and they drew the menu and all sorts of things. It took about a week.

Is there ever a moment to outsource responsibility for my kid's schooling?

If frustration is building at home and there are lots of battles, call in reinforcements. Another time when you want to get support is if you suspect your child was behind before COVID closures. Now is the perfect time to get them caught up. Since not a whole lot of new learning is happening, they'll be able to get caught up, and it will put them in a great place for when school starts back up.

What type of relationship should parents have with the tutor?

You want to get to know the tutor but there is no need to hover. You don't need to sit next to your middle schooler while they're working with the tutor. There is also no need to reach out after every session, but I would check in every few weeks to make sure they're on the right pace and that everything is going according to plan.

For those parents who are frustrated and suffering, what can you tell them?

When our centers are open, every director keeps a box of tissues in their office because when families come to us they are stressed and worried. They want what's best for their children. We offer the same reassurance to parents now: "We know what we're doing. We can figure out what the obstacles are. Hand your worries to us. We've got it."

Interview by Susan Borison

Fantasy

HedgerHumor.com

I love the schedule you created, Mom! What a perfect balance of work and downtime!



I feel so inspired after watching all those TED Talks you suggested!



It's been so nice to have this extra time with family.



REALITY

©Adrienne Hedger

What's for breakfast?

It's 2 p.m.!



How's school?

I don't know. I'm watching YouTube videos of people playing video games.



Why can't I just go quarantine with Riya and her family? She said I could!



6 Things I'm Doing With My Teens Right Now



It's been weeks of no school and no leaving the house unless it's for food or to take a walk.

Keeping spirits up is challenging to say the least. Like all of us, my three teenagers miss their friends, social lives, and just being able to have more freedom. We slogged through the first week at home, doing our best to get our work done and sleeping a lot. We thought our time at home would pass sooner rather than later. We were wrong.

Now, I'm prepared. I'm ready to start talking about all the things we can do instead of all the things we cannot do. I'm ready to face the fact that the next few months are going to be scary and uncertain. But that doesn't mean we have to isolate ourselves more than we have to. I'm ready to start doing some other things to break up the monotony—because we all need it.

I want us to focus on the things we can do—and do them.

Things To Do Right Now

1. Get dressed up for dinner

We can still get dressed up and have a nice dinner at home. We did this last night and there was something so refreshing about shedding my leggings and putting on a dress and heels, even if it was only for an hour. I made my kids' favorite lasagna and we lit candles. It lifted our spirits and got us away from eating in front of the television in our pajamas—which has been amazing, don't get me wrong, but we needed a change of pace.

2. Have a picnic in the backyard

If it's warm enough, of course. Getting outside to have a meal leads to other good things, like shooting hoops, looking for four-leaf clovers, and lying on our backs and watching cloud formations. It might still be too chilly where you are, but you can have a picnic on your living room floor too.

3. Move our bodies

My son's gym is closed and he's missing it. He used to go every day and now that's not an option. So many places are offering free workouts whether it's on their Facebook page or through an app. We can work out as a family too, which is definitely entertaining. Just a little bit of movement is such a great mood booster and certainly takes care of any extra energy.

4. All things virtual

Not only can we find workouts online, we can do so many other things virtually. Online book clubs, video chats with friends, and Facebook groups offer endless opportunities to connect with real and virtual friends and family.



5. Cooking together

My daughter and I have already made so many meals together, I've lost count. Tonight, my son and I are going to attempt to make oatmeal pies. This isn't something we would have much time to do if life was normal right now. And since we are missing the meals at some of our favorite restaurants, we've been looking up copycat recipes to try.

6. Going for a ride

My kids always hop in the car when I need to go to the market now. They stay in the car while I go inside to do our food shopping, but just getting out to see the signs of spring is a treat. They haven't been this excited to go anywhere with me in years. And I'm loving it.

Times feel dark, but that doesn't mean we aren't allowed to find the light. It's good for all of us to start focusing on the things we can do instead of talking about all that has been taken from us. It doesn't mean we are putting our heads in the sand and ignoring the problem. It means we are finding some positivity—something we all need a big dose of right now. And we'll take it wherever we can get it.

Katie Bingham-Smith had three kids in three years and crafts herself silly in order to stay sane. She loves to write, wear faux leather pants, eat at burger joints, and make beautiful things. You can see more on her blog www.philigry.com, [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

You Deserve a Break from the News: 5 Websites That Make You Feel Good

There are a lot of depressing and anxiety-producing things going on in our world right now. Even if you manage not to think about them for an hour or two, you have only to turn on the TV or open your computer, and you're reminded all over again. If you need a little good news or a laugh, or something inspirational in all this, we get it. We've gathered a few news sources dedicated to promoting positive stories that will inspire you, make you smile, and even laugh at some of the amazing, silly, and even delightful things the internet has to offer. Remember, it's still okay to be happy.



← **Some Good News**

“The Office” alum John Krasinski has launched a homemade show “Some Good News” on YouTube covering only good news for an “incredibly trying time.” Krasinski has created the show to highlight how the “human spirit broke through” during the coronavirus pandemic and to lift spirits with inspiring news stories that have been overlooked. He’s orchestrated a mini “Office” reunion with Steve Carell, surprised a 9-year-old fan with the cast of “Hamilton,” and hosted a virtual YouTube prom for high school seniors. “Some Good News” is a show your entire family can enjoy.

Positive News

One of the most prominent good news websites is UK-based Positive News. Founded in 1993, the organization aims to produce “constructive journalism” which doesn’t focus on negative or conflict-ridden headlines. With sections on society, lifestyle, environment, science, and opinion, there’s plenty to read that is positive and uplifting.

The Good News Network

For over 20 years, the Good News Network has been a trusted source for good news and has an archive of 21,000 positive news stories from around the globe. Available in an app for iOS and Android, a podcast, and a daily newsletter.

Happy News

On Happy News, you’ll find international and national news on topics ranging from business, health, science, sports, and entertainment. There’s an entire category called Heroes about everyday people doing good deeds and accomplishing amazing things. Do a virtual tour of the fall foliage in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Learn about a recently discovered Leonardo da Vinci painting. Read about a teenager who saved drowning newlyweds. Happy News also has a roundup of videos and products chosen to make you feel good, too.

Sunny Skyz

This site aggregates “good news stories” from around the world. Read stories submitted by readers every day about inspiring things that happened in their lives, such as a man handing out \$10,000 to people waiting in an unemployment line or a dog who stayed by a missing 4-year-old for 2 days until she was found. Sunny Skyz has light, fun videos, jokes, photos and other feel-good things you need—like photos of a dolphin’s reaction to seeing a sloth for the first time, or dogs “helping” to work from home.



Games People Play

When the going gets boring, the bored get playing. Online, of course.

We've all been stuck at home so long now, you're probably tired of all your board games and feeling done with arts and crafts. So what's left to do?

Your teenagers might actually have the answer to this one. If they've had their faces buried in their phones, it might not just be for SnapChat and TikTok. There's a good chance that they're playing some kind of online game. But this doesn't have to mean solo veg-out time—a lot of online games can also be played with more than one person. And best of all, you don't even need to be in the same room to play them together.

Here are some options your teens may or may not already know about. Maybe they'll teach them to you; or maybe, just maybe, you can impress them with your knowledge!

Card Games

From [Uno](#) to [Funemployed](#) to [Cards Against Humanity](#), there are lots of online versions of card games, and many of them are free. I guarantee that there is a teenager in your house who can help you find these games online and set them up for you.

Word Games

Now is a good time to bust out those two-player word games that are available as free apps. Players need to download the app, and then it's game on. Now is the perfect time to play a game of **Words with Friends**, **Scrabble**, or **Scattergories**, just to name a few. If you want to spend time with someone far away, call them up, pull up the app, and it's almost like you're playing Scrabble together in your living room! (*Shh*: They're also a great way to slip in some educational fun with your kids.)

Strategy Games

Interested in some problem-solving games where you have to use strategy to win? Check out the **Sea Battle** app, an online play-alike version of the classic **Battleship!** You can even find some online communal puzzles to complete with friends—you can either work together or compete to see who puts the puzzle together the fastest.

Here's a perfect one for social distancing: **Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes** actually hinges on not being near each other. One person is named the Bomb Defusing expert, and the other is "in a room with a bomb." The bomb expert (or experts) receives a manual (online) with directions for defusing the bomb that includes diagrams and step-by-

step instructions, but never actually gets to see the bomb. The other player (or players) can see the bomb, but cannot see the instructions on how to defuse it. The expert has to walk one play-



er through defusing a bomb they have never seen, giving instructions from a diagram the other player has never seen. Neither player has the whole picture, and it's all about communicating.

To play with another family, one household can get the instructions free online, and the other household can download the game itself, for a fee. You'll also need to [create a free Steam account](#).

Party Games

The **Jackbox Party Packs** are a personal favorite of mine. They each come with five different games. And all you need is a mobile phone, tablet or any other handheld device. You do need to purchase and download the game, but it is easy to share with others as long as they have internet access.

Each Jackbox game has its own rules and plays completely differently. I love Quiplash, which is similar to Cards Against Humanity but you write your own prompts. For age-appropriateness, look for the family-friendly icon in the bottom corner.

For a free party game option, check out the online version of the popular board game **Codenames** at horsepaste.com. Simply start a game, share the link with your friends, and play while you're on a video call. Or get creative with other old-school but Zoomable games—maybe play **Yahtzee** (everyone has five dice, right?) or **Pictionary**. The video chat app **Houseparty** (a free app you can download) has built-in interactive games like drawing and trivia that you can play while you chat and see each other.

What else? Just ask your teenager. Let them lead the fun this time!

Planting Seeds of Hope

A little green can go a long way for everyone's mental health.



I remember the first flowers I grew in a garden. I was a preteen when my stepmother bought me a packet of bachelor's buttons seeds and we planted them in the backyard. When they bloomed, the flowers were leggy and sparse, but I was thrilled. When I was a teen, my parents fostered a beehive on our suburban lot, and I learned to distinguish between honeybees and yellow jackets. As an adult, my garden is my happy place. I call it "dirt church" and, it turns out, there's some science to it. Gardening is good for our mental health.

Whether we're quarantined or not, spring is here. We could all use a little more wellness in our lives, and gardening may just be the answer for you and your teen.

How Gardening Helps

Gardening fosters mindfulness by engaging the five senses, which helps us stay grounded in times of distress, says Rameshwari V. Tumuluru, M.D., psychiatrist and medical director of the Adolescent Acute Partial Hospitalization Program at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's Western Psychiatric Hospital. Dr. Tumuluru created an

on-site Mindfulness, Healing and Wellness Garden that helps her patients manage overwhelming emotions. "The whole concept of mindfulness is to be aware of the present moment without judgment," she says.

Right now, the present moment means social isolation, and depression or anxiety can amplify the discomfort of that. But the acceptance aspect of mindfulness can help,

says Dr. Tumuluru. “This pandemic is a reality. It’s not something you are causing. It’s something that is, and it is restricting everyone’s life.”

By allowing your teen to feel in the present, and acknowledge current realities, a parent fosters emotional safety, says Dr. Tumuluru. Without judgment or rejection of your teenager’s feelings or experience, you allow them to be who they are in that moment. “It helps them stay calm, and once they are calm they can apply the skills we are teaching them.”

“The garden teaches this skill of mindfulness naturally,” she says, whether we’re putting hands in dirt or nurturing a seedling to a flower, fruit, or vegetable. Because maintaining a garden engages the body, mind, and senses, it can act as a self-soothing technique.

Teens who judge themselves can find reassurance in nature, too. “In the garden we can show them that in nature, things are not perfect,” explains Dr. Tumuluru. The tomatoes in the garden are not perfect, but they’re still beautiful and delicious.

Gardening Gets Them Talking

Many therapists use play therapy to engage children in an activity so they’re not focused on the act of talking. Gardening offers the same type of experience for adolescents. “They’re focused on the act of doing, and it brings them out of their shell,” says Dr. Tumuluru.

If you already have a garden, invite your teen to help you tend to it and add to it. Give them some creative control as enticement. Do you have a pet? Growing catnip or installing a simple dog-friendly fountain might just be the garden addition that gets your teen interested. Meet them where their interests lie

to create the connection. If you don’t have a garden, you can start small with pots on a porch or deck—and let your teenager be a partner in planning it.

Starting Small

If starting from seed is intimidating, start with seedlings from your local greenhouse. Many offer online ordering and contact-free pick-up to abide by social distancing protocols. If your local greenhouse is closed due to state restrictions, you can also order live plants online.

Green space and flowers have become scarce in some urban and suburban areas, and that’s not good for the birds and insects that are important for pollination. Even a potted flower on the balcony provides an option that wasn’t there before and can attract those important pollinators. Scott Beuerlein, the manager of botanical garden outreach at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, advises thinking about bloom times to help pollinators—you can either pick flowers that bloom at different times or an annual that blooms all season.

Even in quarantine, the garden is a way to do something positive in this difficult time. “You can give back to this world in some way, which helps us all feel better,” says Beuerlein.

Put another way, Dr. Tumuluru says, “From the seeds of mindfulness, the feelings of health and hopefulness will grow.” And hopefulness is a powerful feeling in a time of uncertainty.

Bonnie Jean Feldkamp is a writer, wife, and mom of three kids whose ages span two decades. Find her on social media @WriterBonnie.



Stock Your Pantry to Cook Take-Out Favorites at Home

For a change of pace, consider shifting the focus to international cuisine.

Since the early days of social distancing and coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, meat, dairy, and frozen pizza have flown off the shelves at our local grocery. Supermarkets limit quantities per customer while experts recommend that shoppers buy two weeks of groceries at a time.

While memes and news reports featured images of empty store shelves, my husband Felipe had the insight to lead us down the international aisle of the grocery store. Felipe grew up in a family where beans and rice were a staple, thanks to the traditional skills of his Mexican-born mother. My husband knows that dry stock items with long shelf lives like rice, beans, and bouillon cubes make a delicious meal—just add water.



Chef Farhana Sahibzada knows this as well. Originally from Lahore, Pakistan, she has been teaching and catering Indian food for more than 20 years in Southern California. She said when the pandemic be-

came evident, “it was natural for me to think of Indian/Pakistani food staples like rice, flour, and lentils as my very first alternative.”

Time to Cook from Scratch

Most families have only so much freezer space. Instead of stocking up on ready-made mac and cheese or frozen pizza, save that space for perishables like meat, dairy, and vegetables. Then stock your pantry with basic dry ingredients that have a long shelf life. This pandemic has given many families the gift of time, so why not use some of that time for cooking meals from scratch, together?

“Make your own favorite ‘Indian take-out’ dish or another cultural restaurant favorite at home for a fraction of the cost of dining out,” suggests Chef Farhana. Or, she adds, you could try something new. But the point is not to make things complicated—Chef Farhana is quick to say that just because you’re cooking from scratch doesn’t mean you have to do everything the hard way. “If there’s a shortcut available, take advantage of that.”

More Options than the Supermarket

When shopping for ingredients, remember that many communities have culture-based

grocery stores. Even when ingredients may be scarce at the supermarket, an Indian, Mexican, or Chinese grocer will likely have what you need. Chef Farhana said when she goes to the Indian grocery, she’s often the only customer there. So, from a social distancing standpoint, she feels much safer at the smaller specialty grocery.

If you want to venture into Indian cuisine at home, Chef Farhana suggests families try making paratha, an Indian flat bread similar to a Mexican tortilla. “Teens will have a lot of fun making their own paratha,” she says. “Try it with a simple fried egg or your favorite omelet for a pampered Sunday breakfast. It’s fun with your main meal of a flavorful Indian/Pakistani curry, too.”

[Click here for Chef Farhana’s recipe](#) from her book *Flavorful Shortcuts to Indian/Pakistani Cooking* for families to try at home.



Cup O' Life Skills

I realize it didn't take a quarantine to enlighten you about HOW MUCH YOUR TEENAGER EATS. Perhaps you had already been practicing what we call "second dinner" (cold pizza /microwaved pasta)—and now, thanks to the pandemic, there is also second breakfast and second lunch, eaten always and only at home. Every. Single. Day.

Which makes this the perfect time for your kid(s) to learn some cooking skills!

Can they already make ramen? Given that this involves only the boiling of water, they probably can. (And no judgment if they can't—you can just add in the educational step about water and how to boil it.) Ramen is cheap and easy, and you can keep lots of it in the pantry, which makes it a good quarantine choice. Is it brimming with nutrients? It is not, unless you add nutritious ingredients. So, encourage your kid to add them, or else to think of ramen more as a snack than a meal.

But ramen is also a very forgiving canvas for culinary experimentation. The stakes are low, for one thing, and it's bound to be at least pretty good, for another. Encourage your teenager to try not only making the classic soup, but also draining the noodles and using them as a base for self-created pasta dishes: cold peanut butter noodles; an impromptu Alfredo, with butter, grated parmesan and a splash of half-and-half (as long as they promise to leave

enough for your morning coffee); something spicy, with sriracha and soy sauce and rice vinegar and ... yum!

"Oooh, make me some?" I always say when I see the ramen lab taking place in my kitchen. Because it boosts confidence and inspiration to prepare food for someone else. Because I want to see what they come up with. And, well, because moms need second dinner too.

HOW TO TURN A 33-CENT PACKAGE OF RAMEN INTO DINNER



Catherine Newman is the author of five books, including the new release [How to Be a Person: 65 Hugely Useful, Super-Important Life Skills to Learn Before You're Grown Up](#). She edits the non-profit kids' cooking magazine *ChopChop* and writes the etiquette column for *Real Simple* magazine. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, with her family.

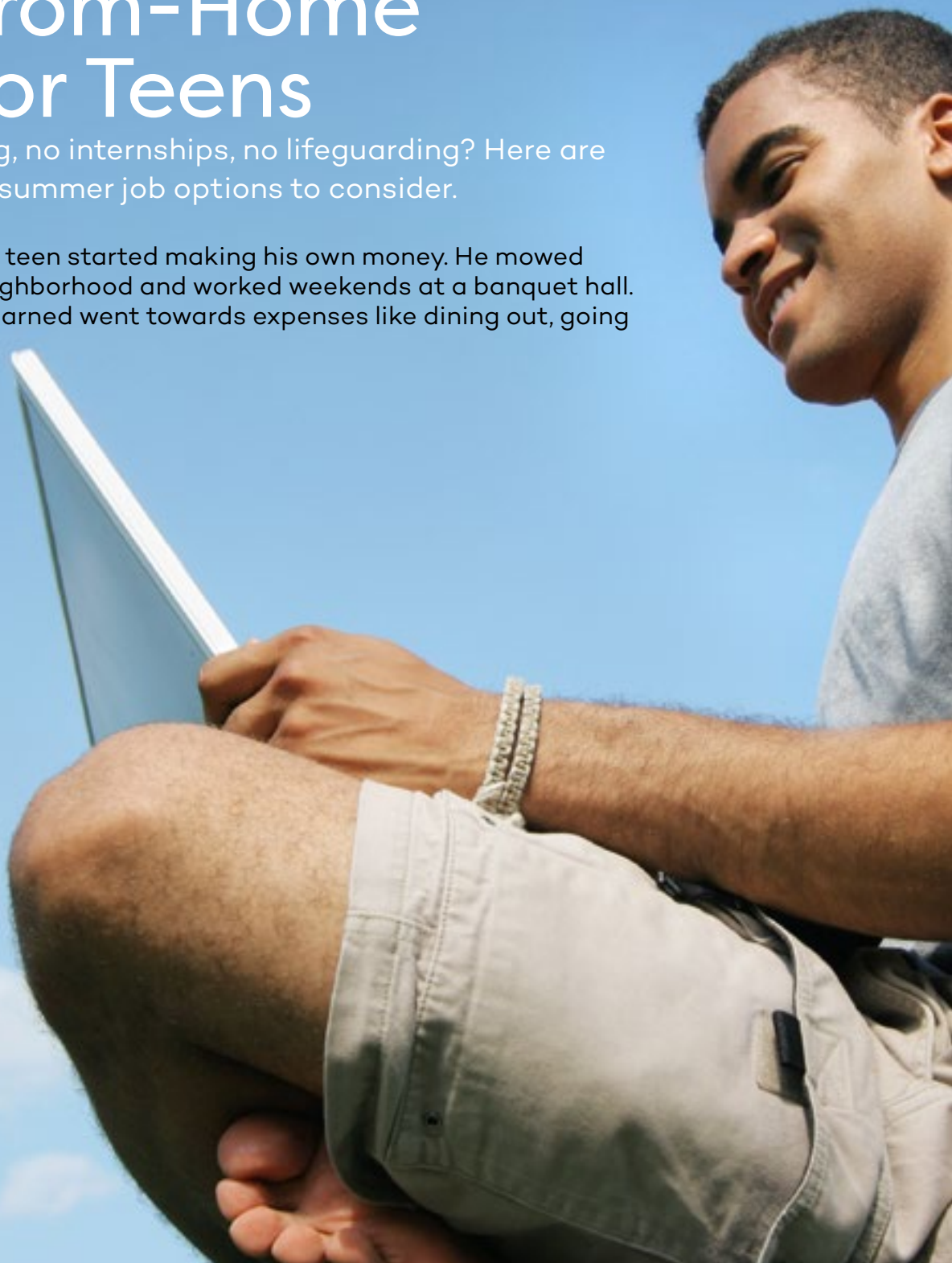
Work-from-Home Ideas for Teens

No camp counseling, no internships, no lifeguarding? Here are some home-based summer job options to consider.

Last summer my teen started making his own money. He mowed lawns in our neighborhood and worked weekends at a banquet hall. The money he earned went towards expenses like dining out, going to the movies, and saving for a car.

This summer we're in the midst of a pandemic and his prospects for making money have dimmed. Granted, there are lawns that still need to be mowed, but businesses like the banquet hall will operate differently this year, if at all. Many businesses are not hiring, have reduced their staff, or are filling jobs typically held by teens with adults needing work.

So what can teens do to make money this summer? Here are a variety of ways that teens can earn some money online without leaving the house.



ONLINE TUTORING

Is your teen a whiz at math? Fluent in French? They can put those skills to use by helping other students online. Teen tutors meet virtually with their clients for an hourly rate. Teens can register their services through sites like TutorCare or be their own boss and manage their services themselves.

ENGLISH CONVERSATION

Teens who speak English as their native language can check out how to become a “personal conversation coach” with SameSpeak. Teens who are at least 16 years old converse with clients from around the world who want to improve their English. Coaching sessions last 30 minutes and teens receive \$10 for every session they complete.

VIRTUAL BABYSITTING

The need for virtual babysitters has exploded since social distancing has made it necessary for many schools, camps, and daycares to close. As a virtual babysitter, your teen would be paid to engage a child digitally by telling stories, playing games, or giving art lessons over platforms like Zoom or Skype. Sessions are short, usually starting at one hour. Parents need childcare while they participate in meetings, work from home, or just take a break. Teens should reach out to neighbors and friends to advertise their virtual sitting services.

SELL ONLINE

Does your teen have amazing skills in embroidery, drawing, woodworking, or more? If so, they should consider selling their wares via an online store. Sites like Etsy allow teens who are at least 13 years old to operate a store and sell merchandise as long as a parent owns and supervises the account. Teens can even sell downloadable items like sewing patterns or art if they want to avoid postage and handling.

Teens can also sell thrift store finds, original creations, or other merchandise on eBay with the permission of the adult account holder.

CALL REVIEWER

“This call may be recorded for quality control purposes,” is something we have all heard while on the phone. By signing up with Humanatic, your teen could be the one listening and rating the friendliness and helpfulness of those customer service calls. This opportunity is for teens 17 years old and up and, while the compensation via PayPal isn’t substantial, it can add up to some extra spending money.

SURVEY TAKER

Many corporate brands seek feedback on their products and offer incentives to answer surveys. Survey Junkie and Swagbucks are two popular sites that allow teens age 13 years and older to register for free. Teens can accumulate points by completing surveys, watching videos, playing games, or even searching the internet. Points can be redeemed through PayPal or gift cards.

FREELANCE SERVICES

Entrepreneurial-minded teens 13 years old and up can list their digital services in graphic design, proofreading, web programming, and more as “gigs” on Fiverr, a website that connects businesses and freelancers. When gigs are completed, Fiverr pays your teen directly, minus a 20% commission fee.

Similarly, Freelancer is another website that allows teens 16 years old and up to bid on jobs or offer services in a variety of categories.

As no one knows yet what to expect with regard to social distancing rules, it’s possible that teens may be spending much of their time at home this summer. But that doesn’t mean they can’t find new, creative, and potentially fun ways to earn some income. Which, with any luck, they’ll be able to spend outside of the house sometime in the not-so-distant future!

Now's the Time for Teens to Learn a New Language

Everyone's already bored, right? Start planning something useful—and fun—for summer.



With the end of stay-at-home orders and social distancing still, well, distant in many areas of the country, your teen's original summer plans of having a part-time job, vacationing, and hanging out with friends are probably going to look pretty different. Why not take advantage of newfound free time—and a plethora of discounted and free online resources—by encouraging your teen to learn a new language? Here are six reasons your teen should use their time at home this summer to study a second (or third or fourth) language.

1 Adolescence is a great time to learn a language.

We know that little kids have an easy time learning new languages. But teens can rapidly pick up a new language between the ages of 13 and 17, too, says Elizabeth Bernhardt, Ph.D, director of the Stanford Language Center and professor of German at Stanford University. That's because, she says, "That age group has a large cognitive capacity and fully developed first-language literacy."

2 You can learn for free or cheap from home right now.

Many language-learning providers and other companies are discounting their tools or offering them for free to help keep people occupied while staying home. Some options include:

- **Audible.** Free audiobooks in multiple languages for kids and teens for the duration of COVID-19
- **Babbel.** One month of free language lessons
- **COERLL.** High-quality open educational resources for language learning
- **Coursera.** Free online courses including multiple languages
- **Duolingo.** Free for basic level of the language-learning app
- **Mango.** Language-learning resource, free to all through June 30, 2020
- **Rosetta Stone.** [Three months free for students](#) and paid subscribers get [free live-group language coaching](#) until June 30, 2020
- **Online resources** to study Latin or Greek during COVID-19 school closure

3 Colleges love languages.

“We have a lot of students super concerned that there are no extracurriculars right now,” says Jeff Schiffman, Tulane University’s director of admission. Although he reassures students that a resume gap is okay during this time, Schiffman says if teens do find a passion, “especially if it’s a language, we’d love to see it.”

“We notice when students take no foreign language after tenth grade,” says Margit Dahl, director of admissions at Yale University, even though Yale, like Tulane, doesn’t have a formal language requirement for admission. “Applicants to highly selective colleges and universities are expected to be doing more than the minimum required. And if a student has taken no language at all in high school (aside from English), it would hurt them. That does not mean we have never taken such a student, but it is rare.”

4 Knowing more than one language might get your teen hired.

You don’t have to be a translator or international diplomat to use multiple languages in the workplace.

“The U.S. population is very culturally diverse,” says Stephanie Naznitsky, executive director of OfficeTeam, an administrative staffing company. In areas with a heavy population of non-native English speakers, teens who can speak the same languages as their coworkers should be able to communicate more effectively.

5 Don’t rule out the classics.

Latin and Greek aren’t the dead languages they’re rumored to be. Learning these classical languages has been linked to better grades and standardized test scores, as well as an aptitude for learning scientific terminology and legalese

for aspiring doctors, scientists, and lawyers.

“Even a basic knowledge of Greek and Latin roots can help students grasp the meanings of many multisyllabic words,” according to Kristen Bortner, executive committee member for Ascanius: The Youth Classics Institute. That’s because more than 60 percent of English words come from these languages.

6 Languages expand teens’ worlds.

Even if your teen never needs their new language in school or on the job, each language they know helps them better understand and appreciate other cultures, opens doors to communication with a wider range of people, and comes in handy for world travel.

To get the most out of a new language, “It’s important to learn a language that you are interested in and excited about,” says Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl, Ph.D., director of the Center for Language Study and adjunct professor of linguistics at Yale University. Teens might want to sample the language of a place they may eventually go for study abroad, or to dig deeper into a culture they enjoy. For example, teens who love anime might be inspired to learn some Japanese, or Korean for kids who love K-Pop.

This is the perfect time for teens to take advantage of being at home and the abundance of cost-effective resources to broaden their linguistic horizons. “It’s just a really good use of kids’ time,” Bernhardt says. “Video games are only good for so long.”

Andrea Vardaro Tucker is a Pennsylvania-based mom of two who is certified in secondary education and previously worked in high school admissions and communications. Find more of her writing at andreavardarotucker.com.

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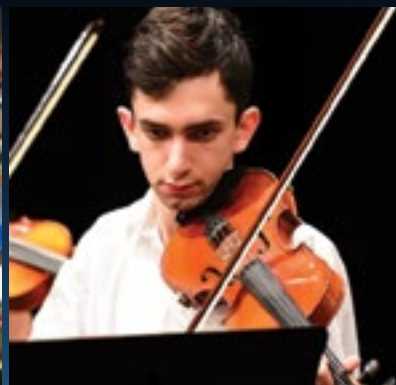


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School Fatigue? Give Extra Attention to Special Subjects

Right now, these classes are more important to kids than ever.

Online learning is a strange new world. Teachers and parents are scrambling to make sure middle-schoolers are mastering the basics, from math to literature, so they can stay on grade level. What we might forget, however, is that traditional subjects were only one part of your student's day. The parts they likely looked forward to the most were "specials"—like music, gym, art, band, and orchestra. (And lunch, of course.)

Middle school students in particular need those opportunities throughout the day to blow off steam and to socialize with peers in a semi-structured way. But how do you organize a soccer game, team-build a model skyscraper, or hold band rehearsal from home?

It's time to get creative, says Lisa Goldman, orchestra director of the Beachwood Schools system in Beachwood, Ohio. "A lot of households are finding ways to create a joyous and productive environment and keep lines of communication open through arts experiences in the home," she says.



To round out your child's learning, we asked educational experts for their suggestions on how to incorporate those all-important specials into your student's new daily routine.

Use Artistic License

Luckily, there is a wealth of online arts offerings for kids, says Goldman. She recommends checking out your local theatre or fine arts centers to see what they can offer. "Many are providing online classes in topics like dance, drawing, sketching, and painting," she explains.



From Your Teen for **Beachwood Schools**, developing intellectual entrepreneurs with a social conscience. Learn more at beachwoodschoools.org.

Broadway shows are also being regularly broadcast online, the Metropolitan Opera is streaming performances almost nightly, and many major museums are conducting virtual tours, she adds. Try watching these together with your child, discussing what you most enjoy about what you see and hear.

If your child plays an instrument, have them practice it outdoors for a new experience. You can also encourage them to hold a living room concert for the family, or a virtual concert for friends and relatives to enjoy via Zoom. Have them decide which pieces they will play and have them print or email their own invitations. And if you happen to play an instrument as well, learn a new piece together. “Music is not just for school—it’s for family, and for others’ enjoyment,” says Goldman. “Everybody benefits regardless of their ability.”

Let’s Get Physical

The good news is that many middle-schoolers are self-motivated to pursue physical education. “Kids who do sports are still doing drills at home,” says Phyllis Fagell, LCPC, a Washington, D.C.-based school counselor and author of *Middle School Matters*. “It’s a bit more challenging for the kids who aren’t necessarily drawn to physical activity.”

Your aim, Fagell says, is to help your child get fresh air, enjoy some physical activity to release endorphins (feel-good chemicals produced during exercise), and stay in a good place emotionally. So take it outside, if you can—go on walks or bike rides together, or find a place to play Frisbee. Take the lead at first. “Kids are so structured these days that many are unaccustomed to going outside and exercising on their own,” Fagell notes.

Try setting a goal together, such as preparing for a 5K run. That taps into kids’ de-

sire for a little competition and introduces an element of fun. Bonus: You’ll both get in better shape.

Engineer Some Fun

While group robotics or maker projects, which involve building something as a team, can’t happen right now, the background work and learning still can be done. Bob Davis, who teaches technology at Beachwood Middle Schools, is having students maintain a spreadsheet related to a mini car they were building before the pandemic.

“They have a choice of different wheel sizes and axle sizes,” Davis explains. “With the spreadsheet, we work with different math concepts, including circumference and radius. We use the spreadsheet to determine how the different combinations of wheel and axle sizes would move the car.”

Encourage your child to find building projects on YouTube they’d like to try. “And if they’re asking for a thousand paper clips because they want to make something, get them if you can afford to,” Davis recommends. “The more basis your kid has of how things are put together, the more they can understand the design process.” Still have Legos lying around? Try breaking those out for some freestyle building fun.

Ultimately, Goldman says, some good may come out of this crisis. “People are learning new skills that they’re going to use later,” she explains. “They’re creating and enjoying—there are a lot of positives.”

Deborah Skolnik’s work has appeared in major magazines and newspapers, including The New York Times, The New York Daily News, Parents, and Good Housekeeping.



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Giving Performing Arts Kids a Stage

With plays and concerts canceled, what can you do?

High school sophomore Maddie Sundheim has been doing multiple community summer theater productions in Minneapolis since the age of 5. This summer will be different. “She was cast in a show and the next day was told it was canceled. She is having a hard time knowing she won’t be doing any theater this summer,” her mom Margaret says.

As students across the country mourn the loss of proms, graduations, and spring athletics, performing arts students are mourning missed spring musicals, recitals, and summer stock.

“One high school in our area still chose to perform their spring musical—to an empty audience,” says Melissa Kildoo, who teaches choir to about 500 middle schoolers in Ohio. “Performing is about giving something of yourself to the audience; it’s sad to hear these stories.” Because of copyright rules, shows can’t be videotaped or streamed.

If you have a theater kid, you know they thrive



on performing. With theaters dark across the country: What’s a theater kid to do?

Find a Virtual Stage

“One thing we know is that no matter what is happening in the world around us, artists will find a way to hone their skills and express themselves,” says Nicole Sumlin, academy and curriculum manager for Cleveland Play House in Cleveland, Ohio. Like many others across the country, CPH has gone virtual, offering online classes to teens through their Theatre Academy, Out-of-School-Time programming, and CARE Program. These programs provide a virtual stage for teens to develop skills in acting,



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One advantage to online theater programming? Even if your town or city doesn't offer classes nearby, your teen may be able to attend classes anywhere thanks to the magic of the internet.

movement, playwrighting, puppetry, and more. "This gives teens the opportunity to explore ways to name, express, and navigate how they are feeling. It's been wonderful to still see students create and connect with each other," says Sumlin.

One advantage to online theater programming? Even if your town or city doesn't offer classes nearby, your teen may be able to attend classes anywhere thanks to the magic of the internet.

Kildoo also takes advantage of online learning by interjecting more music theory into her curriculum. She created an activity for her students where they were asked to find a music-based motivational video and write about why it was special. "I didn't realize how much music is therapy right now. Students really personalized their stories."

She says that videoconferencing programs like Zoom can be hard for her middle schoolers—who are often self-conscious. Instead she's using a social learning program called Flipgrid. "I send out questions

to my students and ask them to record a short video in response. No one else sees the response—just me."

Keep the Creativity Flowing

Sundheim says her daughter is just trying to keep her creative juices flowing. They have watched lots of musical theater together—either free or at a reduced cost to raise money for the artists—including shows released by The Actors Fund, Playbill, and Andrew Lloyd Webber. Her daughter is also continuing her voice lessons via FaceTime, and she is taking online classes through a local theater company.

Not every theater kid needs something structured. Mom Holly K. in Cleveland says her tween daughter, who participates in community theater as well as competitive dance, is enjoying her creative free time. "Sometimes she might be in a tree singing away for an hour. She's trying new pieces in her piano book. She's also exploring how to be creative in new ways: She's learning how to sew."

Other kids might consider channeling their creativity into baking or cooking, trying their hand at drawing or painting, or teaching themselves the latest TikTok dance moves.

In the end, it's about keeping teens—no matter what their creative interest—engaged. Says Raegina Hill, who teaches with the Cleveland Play House CARE program, "People always say absence makes the heart grow fonder, and this time has really done that. Social media has shown that you can't stop the beat. From dance challenges to impromptu skits, the theatre bug is alive and well."

Julie Grippo Schuler lives in Medina, Ohio with her middle school teen son and tween daughter.



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What about my Teen with Learning Issues?

Online learning hasn't been easy. Now and into the summer, you'll want this expert advice for parents trying to be both tutor and caregiver.

While all parents are struggling to help their teens with distance learning, it can be especially daunting for parents of students with learning disabilities or any kind of IEP or 504 plan. I have insider knowledge on this struggle because my own daughter has dyslexia, dyscalculia, and an IEP.

As I help her navigate her workload, I now have an added layer of responsibility. Suddenly, I'm on call all the time: helping my kid figure out the online platform; assisting with notetaking and essay writing; emailing her teachers when accommodations aren't included in quizzes; and trying to be a calm and patient tutor when my daughter doesn't understand mitosis.

"It's a frustrating time for caregivers. Most parents didn't go to graduate school to become a special education teacher," says Hadassa Meyers, director of educational services at A+ Solutions. Her company specializes in psycho-educational testing, psychological counseling, and tutoring services, particularly for students with learning challenges.



From *Your Teen* for **A+ Solutions** Educational and Psychological Services, finding solutions to life's challenges. Learn more at thinkaplus.com.

Parents shouldn't have to go it alone, says Meyers. Here are her top tips for parents of teenagers with learning issues, including ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and anxiety.

1 Ask for help from their teachers.

Before the school year ends, go straight to the source: Start by asking their teachers how they have helped your student in the classroom, so you know what kind of assistance they'll need at home. Now is not the time to use Google every time their work confuses them. Instead of you trying to learn the material and teach it to your student, have your student email their teacher for help. This is the perfect time for your teen to learn how to advocate for their needs. Help them with "the ask" a few times, then put them in charge of that communication.

2 Hire a learning intervention specialist.

If you're not getting the support you need, it may be time to hire a trained intervention specialist. Look for somebody with expertise in special education who is skilled in figuring out what learning interventions will meet your child's specific needs. One great way to find help is by reaching out to your school's guidance counselor for recommendations of reputable companies. Make sure whoever you work with only hires professional teachers. You'll also need to take your child's personality into consideration: Do they need someone with an outgoing personality, or someone with a calm, quiet presence? Make sure you'll have the option to ask for a different tutor after a few sessions if the first match isn't ideal.

3 Track their learning.

Think about what your student could typically complete in the classroom, perhaps by looking at a few of their completed assignments. Then keep track of how they do or don't progress with online learning. As parents of kids with learning issues, we know we have to document how our students are doing so they can get the help they need from schools. When school starts back up, we can use this data collection to let our child's school know how they have progressed or regressed, so the school can adjust their IEP or resources accordingly.

4 Use summertime to prepare for next fall.

We all know these months of distance learning have not replicated in-school learning. It's important that we use this summer to practice the skills they will need for a successful re-entry this fall. Check the department of education website for your state for grade level standards by subject. You may want to hire a professional tutor for guidance on what skills your student should have mastered before moving on to the next grade.

Overall, the best advice is to remember that your primary role is to be mom or dad, not professional educator. A parent's job is making sure their teenager is physically and mentally healthy, so they are able to learn. We don't need to know how to find the slope of a line for math class, but we do need to be a supportive cheerleader for our teenagers.

And, since we know our students best, we also get to prioritize what is best for them right now. Sometimes that will mean having them take a break from distance learning on Tuesday to ensure they have the capacity to learn on Wednesday.

Seattleite Nancy Schatz Alton is an author, editor, poet and frequent contributor to Your Teen Magazine at yourteenmag.com.

A Request From a Mom of a New High Schooler: **After Social Distancing**

Last fall we visited our local high school during their open house evening. As we walked through the warren of hallways, in and out of buildings, and up and down stairwells, I tried to imagine my oldest daughter starting there a year later. I worried she would be lost in a crowd four times the size of her current school, where the older students stand a full head taller than she does.

We spoke to teachers, students and staff, all of whom reassured us there would be welcome days, meet and greets, and fun activities planned for the incoming class to help them. I walked away feeling confident the high school would help my daughter land on her feet.

Fast-forward six months and we're living in a reality I could never have imagined. Most of the world is under the equivalent of house arrest, assignments arriving fast and furious via email. My husband and I juggle work and homeschooling, running out of hours in the day well before our to-do list ends.

We had to tell the kids that the next time they set foot in a school building will be September. My younger daughter didn't bat an eye, content to return to her familiar school building, where every teacher



knows her name and she can walk the hallways blindfolded. But my future high schooler, well, let's just say she was not quite so blasé.

For new middle and high schoolers, the transition will not be business as usual. Here is what I'd like teachers and administration to do to help them find their feet after social distancing ends.

What Returning to School Should Look Like

Rethink your welcome process

Without the distraction of end of year award ceremonies, goodbye parties, and beach holidays, our kids have too much time to sit and worry about how big and scary their new, strange school will be. They need someone to step in as soon as possible and tell them all will be okay: They will be welcomed, and embraced as they become part of a new family. The standard process of mailing a packet a few weeks before the new school year starts is not going to cut it.

I'd love for middle and high school staff to think of creative ways to ease our children into their new homes. Maybe it is a virtual tour with a scavenger hunt. Maybe it is a series of Zoom calls with new homeroom teachers. I'd be happy to have my daughter paired with an older student, acting as pen pals for a few months. Whatever it is, let's not hold off until August to launch it.

Next year, take as much time as you need to get to know these children

Many schools fill the first weeks with a battery of assessment tests, benchmarking students' capabilities and understanding. In September, we need you to toss those out the window. We've been thrown into the deep end of home learning and home working. Some children will have spent six months watching Netflix. Others will have had hours of 1:1 tutoring. The end result will be a hodgepodge of learning gaps and missed objectives. We're talking the

regular summer learning drop on steroids, and no standardized test is set to account for a lockdown. We parents need teachers to have the space and time to sit down with our children. To talk with them, hear their stories, and grasp their abilities. We need administration and governing bodies to allow it.

Focus on pastoral care instead of test achievement

Teachers have long lamented how end-of-year tests dictate too much of the curriculum. Here is our chance to overthrow the tyranny of these rigid standards. It will no doubt take months to bring students back up to a consistent level of baseline knowledge. The sooner we accept this, the better off we all are.

These children will require new lesson plans, giving teachers the freedom to group where possible and support with more 1:1 tutoring around the edges. Educators keep reassuring us parents that our children's minds are elastic. They will bounce back from this trauma with little long-term impact. We need next year's learning objectives to be the same: flexible and forgiving, with a view to long-term success rather than short-term achievement.

High school is supposed to be the time when children take on more responsibility for their learning and their lives. We shift the mantle of obligation for completing homework assignments, returning library books, and talking with teachers from parent to child.

For the incoming class of new students, let's work together to rethink that process. For children whose whole lives have been upended again and again, a strong and steady support framework may be the best help we can offer.

Lynn Morrison is a full-time writer, finding time between the school runs to pen essays, contemporary romances, and cozy mysteries. You can find more about her books at lynnmorrisonwriter.com.

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The College Admissions Process: Now What?

Your top questions answered by professionals in the know.

My 11th grader is most definitely not having the junior year we had expected. Not only has he traded his tennis season and the prom for endless hours of gaming, he also feels as though his college search has been weirdly suspended, even though we realize it's still crunch time. But with his standardized tests canceled twice and campuses closed to visitors due to COVID-19, the college search part of our calendar is as empty as the rest of it.

Of course, these hardships don't hold a candle to the milestones our seniors are missing, compounded by endless question marks about what college campuses might look like next year. With so many students and parents wondering what's next, we found the answers to five burning questions they're asking right now.

How can I find out more about schools when they are closed?

Spring and summer are often prime time for juniors and seniors to visit schools: juniors to start deciding on their lists of schools to apply to, and seniors to take a final look once they've received their admissions letters. (Decision day is traditionally May 1; however, many colleges have extended that deadline to June 1 due to the pandemic.)



But just because the campus is closed doesn't mean you can't still get information, assures Mary Lynn Perri, assistant dean of enrollment management and financial aid for Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, Ohio. Stay in touch with the admissions office, she urges. "We're still here to answer your questions," she says, suggesting your student start with an email and then arrange a phone or video call. "I have hosted two recent meetings with an admissions representative, coach, faculty member, and the family," she says. "In some ways, having all the various participants on a Zoom call at one time can make it easier for parents and students to get their questions answered."

What about virtual college events?

While there's nothing quite like seeing a campus in person, there are still many options available that can help narrow your choices.

Ursuline College

From Your Teen for **Ursuline College**, a women-focused liberal arts college that connects students to respected programs and real-world partnerships. Learn more at ursuline.edu.

Ursuline College, for example, has posted a variety of recorded sessions and events on YouTube to give students a feel for the experience and atmosphere and enable them to virtually meet professors and coaches. “Treat virtual events like you would on-campus events,” Ursuline College’s Director of Admission Emily Haggerty says. “Plan to attend them as a family so that you, as the parent, are learning about the colleges, too.”

Of course, not every family has reliable access to internet service, so traditional outreach methods of email, phone, and snail mail are still important. “Remind your teen to check email frequently, including spam and promotions folders,” she says. “This is still the top way for colleges to connect with students to share information and updates, and you don’t want to miss out.”

Given many new test-optional policies that are being adopted by colleges, what should juniors know?

While many schools had already been heading toward a test-optional model, even more are waiving the test requirement for the upcoming admissions cycle, which means the remaining pieces of the application will carry more weight, says Sara Harberson, a former dean of admissions and founder of the blog Application Nation.

“The transcript always matters the most, so students with extremely strong transcripts will be the most competitive, with or without test scores,” she says. And remember, they will be looking for rigorous class choices as well as grades. But, she adds, just because a school is test-optional doesn’t mean it won’t consider scores in their decision-making process. “Even if a college drops the testing requirement, they will always value high test scores. So go ahead and send the test scores if they are good, but don’t sweat it if it’s not your student’s strong suit.”

What’s one part of a college application that juniors should focus on now?


Students should keep up with their classwork and prep for standardized tests if they choose to take them. But there’s another key application piece they can finish now—identifying teachers and asking them for recommendation letters, suggests Harberson. “The most popular teachers sometimes have to put a cap on the number of letters they agree to write, so secure your prospective letter writers early, ideally before the end of junior year.” Unless your child is applying to a specialized program, such as studio art or music, it’s best to focus on teachers from core subjects: English, math, history, science, and foreign language.

What happens if my financial circumstances change?

With the topsy-turvy economy and job loss impacting many families, the financial considerations can be immense and unsettling. Perri reminds graduating seniors who may be concerned about a loss of income to check with their school to see if there is an appeal process that might make them eligible for additional aid. At Ursuline College, for example, they have a form where families can report their estimated expected 2020 income to be used in lieu of the income information reported on the FAFSA. “Most colleges are asking families to wait until after June 30 to complete these forms so that the estimation process will be a bit easier,” she says.

While nobody likes uncertainty, there is some comfort in knowing that all of us—families and colleges alike—are in the same boat. So, keep taking those virtual campus tours, triaging essay topics, and nudging about test prep if need be. With luck, you’ll soon be visiting the college bookstore in person to buy that t-shirt!

Cathie Ericson is a freelance writer based in Portland, Oregon, and mom of three teen boys. Read more about Cathie at CathieEricsonWriter.com.



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College Investments in the Age of COVID-19

How should families plan for what's next?

When my sister heard that her son's college would be abruptly changing from on-campus living to online learning, she was overwhelmed with questions, including: What happens to the money we paid for housing? This spring, many colleges across the country returned millions of dollars to families. Miami University in Ohio is scheduled to return \$27 million; Michigan State reports refunding around \$50 million.

The financial implications of COVID-19 closures for college-aged and college-bound students are tremendous, both in what they're getting back—and what they're losing.

"These are anxious times, and that leads to uncertainty about what will happen in the fall," says Tim Gorrell, executive director of the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority (OTTA), which manages Ohio's 529 Plan, CollegeAdvantage. He's well-positioned to understand the financial implications of COVID-19 and college, since 529 plans provide a tax-advantaged way to save for life after high school.

Here are some of the questions and concerns he's hearing most right now from parents:



Q • Should I keep saving for college?

Tarun Garg, head of college savings at BlackRock Financial, reports that roughly 13% of the U.S. working age population lost their livelihood in the first five weeks of the pandemic—and many more have seen their income reduced. He notes, "for families that are directly impacted, saving for college may not be a top priority." That said, experts suggest staying the course as much as possible for those who can. "If you can keep contributing to your 529, even at a reduced amount, you should," says Gorrell. "Take advantage of systematic payment options that come directly out of your paycheck or bank account."



From *Your Teen for Ohio Tuition Trust Authority*, administrator of Ohio's 529 Plan, CollegeAdvantage. 30 years of helping families save for college. Learn more at collegeadvantage.com.

Q • How should I change my investments?

With the stock market fluctuating daily, this is an especially difficult time for parents who are using their savings for education or on the cusp of using them. “A big question right now is about moving investments from one 529 fund into another,” Gorrell says. “Federal policy allows account holders to do a maximum of two exchanges per calendar year, so it’s a good idea not to change things around without thinking through the long-term.” (The [CollegeAdvantage website](#) provides tools to help guide families on this.)

For families with more time before college begins, one consideration is “enrollment date portfolios.” These automatically adjust the portfolio to reduce risk based on the anticipated year the child will go to college.

Q • What should I do with any refunded money?

If you received a refund from your child’s university for room and board or other mandatory fees, and that money originally came from a 529 account (vs. personal savings), you should re-deposit the refunded amount back into the 529 Plan to avoid tax penalty. In April, the IRS issued new rules giving families until July 15, 2020 to re-deposit refunds into a 529 account (or up to 60 days from the processing date of the refund—whichever comes later).

“If you don’t deposit the money back into a 529 account, the refund amount is considered a non-qualified withdrawal, which is subject to taxes and penalty,” advises Garg.

A re-contribution is not considered a new contribution for purposes of state income tax benefits related to 529 plans.

Gorrell strongly encourages including a signed letter stating that this is a re-contribution due to a school refund with your check. These documents could be helpful in the unfortunate event you are ever audited by the IRS.

If you decide instead to use the refund for upcoming qualified higher educational expenses at the school during the same calendar year (rather than re-contributing it), you should still keep those detailed receipts.

In addition, you may want to consult with your tax advisor regarding the tax implications of any refunds and/or re-contributions.

Q • What happens if my child won’t—or can’t—go away in the fall?

“Everything is evolving, and the big questions are, *What will higher education look like in the fall? Will students be back on campus?*” says Gorrell. He knows many parents may be reassessing out-of-state vs. in-town learning, wanting to keep kids closer to home. “There’s built-in flexibility with 529 accounts: You can use the money you’ve saved at many higher education entities, including training and apprenticeship programs.” Funds can also be used for qualified expenses that go towards college—like computer equipment or internet connection costs for virtual learning.

“Right now, all is not lost. This is a great opportunity for both parents and students to think outside the box and broaden their horizons,” says Gorrell.

ASVAB CEP: Start Exploring Careers Now

School is on hold, but thinking about the future doesn't need to wait.

Almost overnight, the world changed, and high school students are faced with massive uncertainty, but there are still some career exploration steps you can take now. College, career, military—all have something to offer, and it's hard to know what might be right for your student. One tool that many parents and teens may not know about is the ASVAB Career Exploration Program, which combines an aptitude test with a career inventory to connect skills and interests to help point your student to a path that's right for them.

What It Covers

Unlike standardized tests that primarily measure math and language, the ASVAB CEP includes sections that assess electronics, science, and mechanical aptitudes, which can help open doors students might not otherwise have been considering, says ASVAB CEP director Shannon Salyer. "The program is exploratory, rather than prescriptive—more of an aptitude test and interest inventory," she says.

How to Access It


While the program is usually offered through high school guidance counselors, due to COVID-19, ASVAB CEP testing activities are temporarily suspended. However, there are things parents can do now and over the summer with their teens to help start the conversation about what's next after high school. To access the career exploration tools offered by ASVAB CEP, create an account at asvabprogram.com by entering your email and using the access code PSPR20. These tools include an interest inventory and a career catalog with occupational data and planning activities that help you put it all together. Additional online resources, including comprehensive information on colleges, scholarships, credentialing, and the military, are all housed all in one place.

ASVAB CEP Scores Can Open Doors

While participating in the ASVAB Career Exploration Program doesn't mean kids are automatically approached by the military, excelling on the test can open doors they might not even have known existed. Parents can opt in or out of having scores sent to the military depending on whether they'd like their child to explore that path. If they opt in, qualifying scores will put students on all the branches' radar, allowing students to compare offers and see what sign-on bonuses are being offered from each one.

Choose Your Own Adventure

Once a student takes the test, the scores are good for two years. So if "Plan A" doesn't work out, they can revisit it. "We like to think of this progression as a 'choose your own adventure' where there's not just one pathway. People tend to think military or college or credentialing. But in reality it can be 'and.' We see students pursuing all those pathways at once or different ones at different times in their lives." Not sure if your school offers the ASVAB CEP? You can express your interest by visiting this site to request information for your counselor. Someday, hopefully soon, our kids will all be back in school and ready to focus on the future.



From Your Teen for **ASVAB Career Exploration Program**, helping teens discover their path to success. Learn more at asvabprogram.com/parents-information

CONNECTIONS

Feeling Helpless?

Here's How You Can Help During This Crisis



Most of us have already spent at least several weeks at home, social distancing, and reducing errands and contact with those outside our household as much as we possibly can. In our house, our teens have begun distance learning, and we differentiate the weekdays from the weekends based on whether or not we have to wake up to Zoom with our teachers and colleagues.

As it has become clear that we're all in this for months and possibly even longer, our thoughts turn to what we can do for the long haul to stay mentally well and to help those who are suffering.

In my house, we realize that we need to take care of:

1 Yourself

Research shows that we can do more for others when we take care of ourselves. Dr. Lucy McBride, a practicing physician in Washington, DC, offers practical tips for pro-

tecting our mental health during this stressful time. Top on the list are taking deep breaths when you notice your stress level rising; getting outside for sunshine, fresh air, and exercise (at a safe social distance of course); and downloading a meditation app on your phone.

2 Your family members

Research also shows that thinking about the well-being of others makes us happier humans. I worry so much about being across the country from my parents, in-laws, and especially my 91-year-old grandmother who is confined to her room in an assisted living facility. Seeing them all right now is out of my control, but what I can do is call them daily, send cards and photos, and urge my teens to text, call, and FaceTime as well.

In terms of your new 24/7 roommates—aka your spouse and kids—try to have some extra grace and patience as we all adjust to this new togetherness. And, that parenting mantra “choose your battles” has never been more relevant than right now.

3 Your neighborhood

Are there elderly neighbors who need grocery deliveries? Does your church have a food drive or outreach that you can participate in? A high school junior started a trading post in our neighborhood on which people share items with others who need or want them. So far, residents and local businesses have donated a thermometer to a dentist so he could keep seeing patients, masks to an immunocompromised resident so she could get to the grocery store, outgrown toys to younger kids, seeds for those who are starting spring gardens, and more. If your neighborhood doesn't have a group like this, maybe you (or your teenager) can be the one to make it happen.

Be extra kind and patient when you are out, and please thank the public servants, grocery workers, mail carriers, custodians, and garbage collectors who are working every day to keep our neighborhoods ticking along.

4 Your town

Your favorite restaurants would greatly appreciate your takeout orders, purchases of gift cards for future dining, and donations to any employee relief fund or virtual tip jars they have. This goes for gyms, hair and nail salons, and any other small businesses that you support.

Food Banks and Meals on Wheels are working overtime to get food to all their usual clients, plus families who are newly food insecure because they are not getting school breakfasts and lunches or because they are recently unemployed. If you are healthy, you may also be able to volunteer as a driver or food bank worker during this time, because so many of their senior citizen volunteers must stay home to keep safe. Is there a charity you usually support? They can likely still use your help, even if it is in a different form. Reach out and see how you can be of service. We've come up with a dollar amount that is manageable for us as a family to sustain giving each week until this crisis has passed. Every week, one family mem-

ber is in charge of coming up with a list of possible charities, and we vote on Sunday evenings for that week's recipient.

Are you an animal lover? Local shelters are looking for fosters for their pets so their employees can stay home. Here in Southern California, we're coming up on kitten season and our local shelter has put out the call for kitten fosters. One of our other *Your Teen* staffers is fostering a dog for six weeks, and their new pup has brought much needed structure, love, and laughter into their household.

5 Your healthcare HEROES

We don't have the words to express our depth of thanks for the nurses, doctors, and hospital staff who are saving lives by the minute right now, but there are a few practical things you can do to show your thanks.

The American Red Cross is experiencing great need for blood donations and they've stepped up their procedures to make sure nobody gets sick when donating.

There's still a shortage of personal protective equipment in hospitals. Many local hospitals are posting their needs online. If you have a stockpile, please consider sharing with your local hospital, or if you're crafty, you can join *Project Runway's* Christian Siriano and sew masks. [Here are the details.](#)

A great way to take care of healthcare workers and your favorite local restaurants is to support a group like Feed the Fight or World Central Kitchen, which arrange for restaurants to provide meals to hospital workers. World Central Kitchen, the charity started by Jose Andres, is doing this work as well.

No one needs to do it all—and we shouldn't try to—but we just may find that reaching out to others will lift up our own families, too.

Emily Vitan is a social media manager for *Your Teen* Magazine.



All I Want to Accomplish During the Pandemic is Loving My Family

While scrolling through social media the other day, I came across a post in one of my parenting groups asking people what accomplishments they would be able to claim after this time of quarantine.

There were more than 400 replies listing admirable reports of entire house exteriors painted and raised-bed gardens planted and antique furniture refinished. I quit reading when I got to a report of someone spatchcocking a chicken.

Meanwhile, I haven't done a single extra project during the entire coronavirus stay-home season so far.

I haven't cleaned out one closet or raked a square foot of my yard. I haven't repainted any room or sorted a solitary pile, although I've got closets and rooms and piles aplenty that could stand the attention.

I certainly haven't painted the exterior of my house or planted a garden or refinished any furniture. And, even if I wanted to, I have no idea what spatchcocking a chicken is, much less how to do it. (I did, however, marinate some boneless, skinless breasts in premade Italian dressing the other day and gave them to my husband to throw on the grill.)

Neither have I had my at-home children do these things, because they are busier than

ever trying to do their schoolwork and their jobs that now take more time than ever to figure out and accomplish well.

To anyone who has done these things (and more), please know I stand in awe and admiration of you. I am truly applauding you.

After reading all those comments, though, I started to wonder what, exactly, I HAVE been doing with my time.

I don't have young children I'm trying to corral or crisis-educate. I don't have an essential job outside the home—but it sure feels like I've got an essential job inside my home.

I finally figured out that I haven't been doing extra things, but I have been doing some unusual things. Maybe this is what you've been doing, too.

I've been baking with my teenager on week-day mornings. I've been cooking family dinners every night. For a family with two older children who have danced several nights a week for years, this every-night-dinner-together deal is a bit of a shock to the system.

I've been telling my stressed college daughter, "If there's a thing in the world I can do to make life easier for you right now, just say it." And so the other night, when she messaged me from her room upstairs while I was downstairs and asked, "Could you possibly bring me a popsicle?" I thought that I had never been happier to do anything in my life.

I've been watching movies until midnight with my college-bound high school junior after my husband has gone to bed. This feels like bonus time with her that I'll look back on and treasure when she's many hours away at school.

I've been going on "walk 'n talks" with several friends, though I almost never normally talk on the phone. I've logged miles and hours along

my country road, chatting on my cell phone with friends while they talk on theirs, whether they're walking or crocheting afghans.

I've been trying to check in with people.

I'm so thankful that getting through this extraordinary, unprecedented time in history is not a competitive sport.

There is no grand prize for the person who emerges from quarantine with the cleanest closets or the tidiest yard or the most new recipes tried or the longest list of books read. Though those are all good things that are prizes unto themselves, of course.

We are all doing what we have to do to get through this with our families healthy and intact. We're all doing some unusual things—and some usual things in unusual ways. We're not trying to win against each other; we're trying to win with and for each other.

For some, getting through and winning means staying busy and tackling those closets and yards. For others, it means being quiet and reflective. For still others, it means doing what they have to do to meet the needs of children who are suddenly home all of the time.

Sometimes, making the most of our time means doing more and, sometimes, it means doing less. Either way, the point is to make sure the people we love know how much they mean to us.

That's how we all win.

Elizabeth Spencer is mom to two daughters (one teen and one young adult) who regularly dispense love, affection, and brutally honest fashion advice. She writes about faith, food, and family (with some occasional funny thrown in) at [Guilty Chocoholic Mama](#) and avoids working on her 100-year-old farmhouse by spending time on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

STOP THE HATE



CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

See the finalists at maltzmuseum.org/sth

The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage is pleased to announce that winners of the 2020 Stop the Hate essay contest. Each year about 3,000 students enter, and with the help of 400 volunteer readers, 25 finalists are named. Congratulations to everyone who has shared their inspiring stories with us.

TO LEARN MORE VISIT WWW.MALTZMUSEUM.ORG/STH

How the Pandemic Is Changing My Parenting—For the Better

In these stressful times, a dad reflects on taking a gentler approach with his teenager.

When the lockdown started, we braced for trouble. Our daughter is a highly sociable, extremely energetic 15-year-old whose world revolves around school, her teachers, and her friends—in other words, she’s a typical teenager. With school closed, the lack of freedom to go out, no sporting activities, and too much free time spent on the phone, we knew we were in for it.

As expected, in the beginning it was very difficult for all of us. My wife and I are health-care workers, so we’re very busy during this pandemic. Coming home and having to face an angry, disgruntled teen after the terrible stress of work was just too much. We started to fall back on the old way of do-

ing things, with scolding, punishments, and consequences.

But it just seemed like things were getting worse. There was no end to it.

While we were busy working, our daughter was home alone and feeling like her world was falling apart. She was likely very worried about us as well, though she would never admit it. About a week after the lockdown started, I was quarantined on suspicion of having COVID-19. I tested negative and was allowed to go back to work, but that was scary for all of us. While in quarantine, I read an eye-opening article about the impact of this terrible time on teenagers and the general feeling of grief and loss they feel.



“If we as adults feel so bad about the changes we see, and about the way things are going to be, how much worse must teenagers feel? How much of their childhood has been taken away?”

My daughter is supposed to graduate from high school this year. She and her peers will not have a graduation, they won't have a prom, and she won't even have a proper final exam. If we as adults feel so bad about the changes we see, and about the way things are going to be, how much worse must teenagers feel? How much of their childhood has been taken away?

So, we decided to try something completely different, something that goes against the grain of our usual parenting: to ignore everything. The mess, the rudeness, the wisecracks, the angry remarks, all of it. We stopped all punishments and consequences—no more withholding privileges or cutting off the Wi-Fi. Instead, we showered her with love and hoped for the best.

This doesn't mean that there are no rules or boundaries for her. The same rules apply, but we are letting the small things slide. With the world teetering on the edge, clutter and a bit of teen rudeness did not seem worth acting on.

The first week, she probably noticed that we weren't in her face so much, but mostly ignored us. We cleared away her things, her dishes, her books for online schooling, the pillows on the floor. And we kept trying to talk to her.

We sent her daily messages about how proud we are of her and how much we love her. That we understand how difficult it is for her. The replies were usually one word: "OK." This was progress. Normally, there would be anger or snark.

After two weeks, we noticed changes. She started clearing away her stuff and was not so rude. She started clearing up her room. Talking to us. Joining us to watch TV. And she stopped reacting angrily to us.

By the third week, we started some projects together. We baked bread, something we had never done before. We started a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. She made jam with me, and now she actually helps me cook dinner. She even cut my hair! In my free time I troll the web looking for ideas of things to do together.

For now, our method seems to be working for us. By backing off, trying to understand her feelings, by just shutting up (and biting my tongue), by being kinder to her, we are seeing the old loving daughter who used to spend time with us.

Will we continue with this unorthodox method of parenting once the lockdown is lifted and school resumes? I don't know. But life is never going to be the same for any of us again, adults or children.

The author is a healthcare worker who lives in Malaysia with his family.

My Teenagers Have My Back

A mom with a chronic illness discovers that her teenagers are rising to the demands of a crisis.

In a case of horrific, colossal, you-just-can't-make-it-up crazy-bad timing, the Crohn's disease (an incurable autoimmune disorder) I've suffered from my whole life decided to pick the middle of a global pandemic to come out of remission. To treat me—and keep me out of the hospital—doctors put me on immunosuppressants. Which means my family and I aren't just social distancing, we are on extreme lockdown. We're staying at home and treating our house like Shawshank. No one's coming in or out. And we're washing our hands like maniacal Lady Macbeths. I am one of millions with some kind of preexisting health condition for whom catching the virus would be even more dangerous. And my kids have a front-row seat to what that means.

When I was first diagnosed with Crohn's as a young mom, after a lifetime of symptoms, I worried that my kids were stuck with a “defective” mom. Mom Guilt can be pretty strong.

But after a total of four kids, lots more life, too many ER trips to count, and a couple of surgeries, I've found that life with Crohn's, despite gut and joint pain, is manageable more days than not. Until the pandemic.

My family and I have faced down my illness plenty of times before. But right now, with the world in turmoil, it is a little bit scarier. What I have noticed, though, is that having a mom with health challenges has some surprising (and positive) impacts—things I notice even more right now as we're isolating together.



First, my kids operate as a team. The four of them are a tight unit, with good relationships between them all. Immediately, they made decisions, such as my oldest daughter and oldest son staying away completely for right now. (Thank goodness for texting and FaceTime.)

They rally around me and root for me. They don't treat me like I'm made of glass. But they are compassionate and keep an eye on me, too. You spend your mother-life ensuring that your kids know you have their back and that home is a soft place to land—and now I see them having my back in return. It's a little role reversal once in a while—and I can see they're growing up.

None of them, not even my mumbling high school freshman, has grumbled about how seriously we have to take self-isolating. No visitors. No exceptions. There have been other times they had to make sacrifices. When I was in the ICU stepdown a decade ago, there was no visiting either. And all through their teen years, they've had to step up here and there when I've been too ill to get out of bed. There have been times plans have been canceled last minute because I was too sick to leave the house.

Not once have any of them complained.

There are kids everywhere feeling scared, stressed, resentful, kids who were seniors in high school or college (like my daughter) and now won't have proms and graduation ceremonies. Kids missing family members they have to isolate from. For my kids, and the children of countless parents who are fighting autoimmune diseases, cancer, or who have serious pre-existing medical conditions, the self-isolation may not be all that new. But it's still sad and tough for them.

But what I've noticed as we've played cards around the dinner table, pulled out Trivial Pursuit, and done jigsaw puzzles is how close

“You spend your mother-life ensuring that your kids know you have their back and that home is a soft place to land—and now I see them having my back in return. It's a little role reversal once in a while—and I can see they're growing up.”

we all are—no doubt at least somewhat because all these years they've had to understand that Mom's got a wonky gene. I'm really proud of them.

We're always hearing how self-centered teens are. But I've found the opposite to be true. The incurable autoimmune disease that I once thought was so unfair a burden for my kids, that I feared somehow ruined the innocence of their childhood and teen years, actually has given them a maturity and wisdom beyond their years. And for that, I am ever grateful.

Erica Orloff is freelance writer and novelist based in Virginia. She is mom of four, a fanatical Yankees fan, and a collector of Buddha statues. Follow her on Twitter @ericaorloff.

Immunizations



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To the Senior Athletes and Their Parents: I Hope You Know

It was supposed to be the best season of all. A high school lacrosse coach shares a message of hope for the families who had to hang up the uniforms and camp chairs too soon.

A picture popped up on my Facebook page today—"Your Memories," they call it—and under the picture were the words, "Three years ago today." It was a picture of my husband, myself, and our middle son on his senior day for college lacrosse.

I smiled, enjoying all the memories. We all looked so happy. It was a beautiful sun-soaked day. And while I don't remember what the final score was, I do remember the feelings. So many, so mixed. An era was ending, but it was a wonderful era indeed.

And then I thought of all the parents and student athletes in high schools and colleges around the country who, through no fault of their own, will not experience this day or these emotions. They won't have pictures to mark the end of their era, and no Facebook memories of this lost season will jump out at them years later.

What can we say to all of you? Really, there are no words that are enough. But there is hope.

I hope that in some way the universe will make this up to you.

I hope you know that we, the parents and student athletes who have gone before you, know how hard you have worked to get here. The sweat, the aches, the pains, the nerves, the sacrifices, the time. So much time—the weeks, the months, the years.

**I hope you know that we know.
We know...**

- ... how much you looked forward to your senior year.
- ... how much you miss being with your teammates, working out together, pushing each other, encouraging each other to do one more sprint, to do one more lift, to take one more shot.
- ... how much you miss the locker room celebration after a win and a teammate's pat on the shoulder after a tough loss.
- ... how much you looked forward to being a role model for the underclassmen. To the captains, we know how much you miss leading your team.

I hope you know that we think about you a lot these days. We think about what it must be like for you. And we think about how fortunate we were, and what it would have been like for us. I hope you know that while we cannot feel your pain, you have our empathy.

I hope you know that we believe that somehow, some way, this will make you stronger. Maybe not today, tomorrow or even next year. But it will. Because we know you are strong, mentally and physically. You must be, because otherwise you would not be a senior athlete.

I hope you know this strength will serve you well in the future. After all, there will be future disappointments and you will be better equipped to handle them.

I hope your coaches and your schools find a way to celebrate you and your efforts.

And senior parents, we hope you know we haven't forgotten you. We know how much you also looked forward to this season.

I hope you know that we know...

- ... it's your turn to proudly escort your senior across the field, the court, the track. We know how many years you sat in stands and celebrated other seniors and their parents. We hope you know that we know it's your turn.
- ... how many meals have been delayed or eaten late or on the run to get your athlete to a practice or a game.
- ... how many hours you spent waiting in your car for practice to be over and for the bus to return from an away game.
- ... how you sat in the stands at a spring sport, wrapped in blankets, holding an umbrella, and cursing the spring weather that brought freezing cold and rain instead of sunshine and warmth.

... about the many years you felt the pain each time your athlete fell to the ground, grabbed an ankle or a wrist, and sat with an icepack on the bench. We know this year was your year to look back on all those times and smile, because you all made it.

I hope you know that all over the country you are being celebrated. You are being honored by all of us, the parents and athletes alike who have gone before you. You can't hear us or see us, but we're out here cheering for you. We see you.

I hope you know.





You Will Miss This

A mom reflects on a senior year without its signature coming-of-age moments.

When my high school senior's prom was canceled, he shrugged.

Proms are really not his thing. Honestly, I think he, a classic introvert, might have been relieved to dodge the elaborate photo shoot with swarms of his classmates and their parents in the sweltering Florida spring heat, sweat dripping down foreheads and no-see-ums nipping at necks, before driving an hour to a resort for dinner and dancing—something he does not do, ever, unless he is trying to beat me at “Just Dance.”

The truth is, my son has been mostly sanguine about his lost senior spring. There is no doubt that COVID-19 has robbed him and his friends of all the glory at high school's end: They still have assignments and quizzes and AP exams, they just don't have any of the fun stuff that is supposed to accompany all that—fun they earned by showing up the past three and a half years and doing the work. He's taking it in stride, though, as are many of his classmates.

In the larger scheme of things, we are all surviving a global pandemic in real time, and

these milestones of senior year are not important compared to the 90,000 and counting human souls in the United States alone who have been lost this spring. My son will be fine without his senior milestones. Yet, when I pull back and think about what the sum of all those those milestones meant to me back when I was graduating, I worry.

These high school seniors walked out of their school buildings one day in March and never returned. For most of them, they had yet to turn the corner toward the parade of “lasts” that make up senior spring—prom, yes, but also Senior Skip Days, awards nights, senior picnics, last games and plays and performances, the last day of exams, locker clean-out—all the big and little moments, the tiny steps on a path that leads them to the graduation stage.

As a GenX parent, I think of those last sweet days of high school as iconic. I flash back through the movies that made me, starting with *Grease*, then *Dazed and Confused*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Say Anything...* To this day, I can't think of a valedictorian's speech without envisioning the character Diane Court saying to her classmates, “I've glimpsed our

future, and all I can say is, go back.” I still have cassette tapes with homemade covers made from magazine clippings with playlists like “For Just a Moment,” “These Are the Days,” “This Is the Time,” and my own high school senior class song, “It’s So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday.”

There’s a reason that this time of life makes for good drama and cheesy (but come on, awesome!) songs. In a year without a global pandemic, these months are the end of childhood. Each “last,” even when the seniors don’t expect it to be a big deal at all, comes with a little pang of recognition that they are leaving something behind. Eventually, that pang is accompanied by the revelation that they are also moving toward something—their futures, whatever they are—as they finally begin to crystallize.

That’s what makes the month of May so bittersweet—it’s both nostalgic and hopeful, packed with loss and gain. What feels like an ending is also a beginning, and this is the first time these young adults realize that, even if only in hindsight.

I worry that these high school seniors, including my own, are not experiencing these incremental and transformative moments. I know that living through this and being the class that shoulders the burden of walking into the world with masks on will make them stronger in the long run and will likely produce better and more resilient adults and leaders in some ways.

But I also wish they didn’t have to be so strong or so resilient. I wish they had their last days to be goofy kids, to make mistakes, to kiss the wrong people, to kiss the right people, to sign each other’s yearbooks with clichés and acronyms they won’t understand when they are 45, to hug their teachers goodbye or to walk through those school doors for the last time with that singular feeling of freedom that only comes when

you know that finally, for the first time in 13 years, you really don’t have any homework at all.

(Cue the Soupdragons’ “I’m Free,” popular in my senior year of high school, a song that still makes me want to throw my head back and sound my barbaric yawp.)

So when my senior wants to order a pizza at midnight—just because—we do. When he wants to go to the beach and he still has school assignments to finish, I tell him to stay 10 feet away from everyone, to take his mask and hand sanitizer, and to have as much fun as he can under those conditions. When he plays Fortnite with his younger brother when he should be sleeping, I turn a blind eye. I’m going to try hard this summer to give him the chance to have the last golden days of his childhood before he moves on to the middle place that is college—even if college has to begin from his laptop in his bedroom.

This is the part of the essay where I should wrap things up with a figurative bow and show transcendence and perspective and leave you with a new insight. I’m sorry, I can’t do that. This spring is out of balance, and I can’t change that for him or anyone else. This May will be one more of loss than of gain, no matter what I do. I am resolved to appreciate and focus on the silver linings, have faith that things will work out in the end, and believe that at some point, when he looks back on this time, my firstborn will see more to these months than just what he missed.

Maybe that is enough.

Allison Slater Tate is a freelance writer and a college admissions counselor in Orlando, Florida. She has four children ranging in age from 8 to 18, and she is not a fan of distance learning. You can follow her on [Facebook](#) or on Twitter @allisonstate.

FROM OUR EDITOR

Expert Advice for Pandemic Parenting of Teenagers

We'd all gotten used to quarantine (kind of). We figured out how to coexist—carving out space to work and learn, figuring out menus and meal prep (clean-up is still a bit of a challenge), and even creating ways to mark moments and stay connected.

I have a feeling that was the easy part. Now, as states

begin to open up, we've got a whole new normal to figure out. We'll need to use our judgment to determine what is the right choice for ourselves and our teenagers. And we're not all going to have the same rules.

Thank goodness for the wisdom of others. We've continued to seek out expert advice on all things pandemic-parenting related to help us

navigate the ins and outs of everything from defiance to resilience. I'm grateful to each of them for the information they've shared. Check out the links below to watch the video interviews.

Wishing your family health (and sanity) in the days ahead.

Stay safe,
Sue

Building on strengths and positive behaviors

with Anisha Abraham

For parents of defiant teens

with Suzanne Schneps

For parents who worry their teen is depressed

with Cara Natterson

For families in conflict

with Rosalind Wiseman

Talking with teens about vaping

with Bonnie Halpern-Felsher

Stress and empathy go hand in hand

with Michelle Borba

For parents of teens with learning differences

with Kelly Christian

Small ways to improve well-being

with Laurie Santos

For parents of middle schoolers

with Judith Warner

Turning obstacles into opportunity for college students

with Frank Shushok

For parents and teens considering a gap year

with Julia Rogers

Consent and healthy relationships in the time of corona

with Shafia Zaloom

STUFF WE LOVE

Coping with Quarantine

You're spending more time in the kitchen—make the most of it with these in-demand appliances.



Keeping it street

Missing your family's favorite taco spot? Spice things up with Verve Culture's Tortilla Press Kit, perfect for making street-style tacos from the comforts of home. This red cast-iron appliance is sure to take Taco Tuesdays to the next level and earn some street cred with your teen(s). \$45

Who needs Starbucks?

If social distancing has put a crimp in your coffee habit, it may be time to buy the Chefman Froth and Brew Coffee Maker (complete with a 20-ounce frothing mug). Recreate your favorite coffeehouse-style drink by brewing from grounds or using K-cup style pods, then topping with picture-perfect froth. You'll love it a latte. \$99.99



Vino on demand

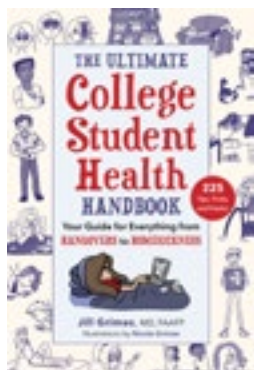
Raise a glass to the Boxxle, a unique wine dispenser that allows you to put your favorite wine on tap—and keep it fresh for up to six weeks. Available in three colors (stainless steel, red, or white), the Boxxle can hold either four bottles of wine or a three-liter bag of boxed wine. Cut down on waste and prolong the lifespan of your favorite libation! \$99

Off to College

Show your graduate some love with these thoughtful gifts.

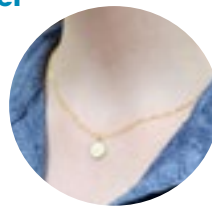
Pandemic primer

Students headed off to college will likely be more health-conscious than ever—and that's exactly why *The Ultimate College Student Health Handbook: Your Guide for Everything from Hangovers to Homesickness* should take up shelf space right next to their textbooks. Chock-full of information on maintaining both mental and physical health, this book is one that Dr. Mom might also want to keep for reference.. \$16.99



To the letter

Still need a graduation or goodbye gift for your grad? Say it with a personalized statement necklace like Susabella's Gold Letter Pendant Necklace bearing their first or last initial. Simple, stylish, sweet—just like your teen. \$22.95



Mix it up

Give your teen the gift of picture-perfect wall décor! MixTiles make it easy to turn photos into keepsakes that can be mounted and remounted easily in any room—including a dorm room—without damaging the wall. Just upload the photos you want, choose the frame style, and wait for a fantastic box of memories to arrive. \$11 and up

Just for Kicks

Tired tootsies need love, too.

Sole food

When it comes to COVID, comfy is the new black—and these “Zilker” shoes by SUAVS definitely fit the bill. Soft and cozy, these lightweight knitted sneakers are the hug your feet need throughout the day. Plus, they’re made of 100% post-consumer recycled threads for an eco-friendly tread. \$95



Steppin' out

Not-so-fun fact: Your feet can grow as much as a half-size every decade after age 40. But here's the good news: for those shoes you couldn't bear to Kondo during the great COVID closet purge, the Formé shoe shaper might be just what you need. Touted as the world's first high heel shoe shaper, Formé expands shoes by up to a half-size while restoring the original heel shape for a more secure fit. \$48.95

Salon At Home

Not ready to resume your pre-COVID primping practices? These at-home products have it covered.

Nailed it

You may not be going back to the salon (yet), but your nails don't have to pay the price. Enjoy a much-needed mother-daughter mani session with The Everything Box by Olive & June. This 14-piece set includes must-have tools, cuticle serum, topcoat, and your choice of six polishes. Afterward, your daughter can show some Insta-love—thanks to a built-in “shelfie” for nail selfies. (Yes, that's a thing.) \$80



About face

That spa glow is within reach, thanks to the All-In-One Facial kit from Hanacure. Packed with wrinkle- and pore-reducing properties, this DIY multi-action facial is sure to fade away any COVID-related stress and leave you looking better than before. \$110

Game On

Too much togetherness? Keep it real with these tell-it-like-it-is games.

Battle of wits

Now here's some screen time we can get behind: Quiplash is an online party game that can be played via phone or tablet by up to eight players at a



time. Channel your cheekiest responses for prompts like "Something you'd be surprised to see a donkey do," while others vote on the wittiest quips. (And yep, a family-friendly option is available.) \$9.99



For your eyes only

This one is just for the grownups! Because, after all, we know better than anyone that Shit Happens. Perfect for Zoom parties, this hilarious guessing game involves ranking hypothetical situations according to their "Misery Index." (Is catching your parents having sex or running out of toilet paper worse? You're about to find out.) \$12.99



Bad libs

Does your teen identify as a "mischief maker?" Then they'll likely be pretty hyped about Not Parent Approved, an irreverent but family-friendly word game along the lines of Cards Against Humanity. Consider it your tween or teen's license to use "vampire bunnies," "fart," and "Grandma" in the same sentence with no repercussions. \$24.99

In the Zoom Room

Take the WTH out of WFH (work-from-home).

Ready for your close-up

When it comes to Zoom calls, it's all about business on top, pajama pants on the bottom—but the right accessories can make for seamless on-camera style. Shine on by customizing a necklace with the Kendra Scott color bar! Choose from four types of metal (gold, rose gold, gunmetal, and rhodium) and more than 30 stones to create an "Elisa" necklace all your own. \$50



Ride the wave

Trying to drown out the oh-so-ambient sounds of your house while on that umpteenth Zoom meeting of the day? Time to stop the world and melt with these WaveSound 3 headphones. Along with noise cancellation, these headphones also offer a built-in microphone to make and receive calls. Oh, and they fold up and easily fit into a carrying case so that they don't magically "disappear." \$99.99

Peace, Love, Music, and Art

Bored? Get crafty with these hands-on activities.



Fit to be tied

Trip the light fantastic with the Tulip Two-Minute Tie-Dye Kit, a fun, fast, and easy way to introduce your teen to the art of tie-dye—and make some snazzy new shirts in the process. This kit includes two containers, four colors (yellow, fuchsia, turquoise, and green), rubber bands, protective gloves, and a project guide. Groovy, baby! \$7.99



Shimmer and shine

Make every night a “Paint Nite” with a Diamond Art Club kit. This fun twist on paint-by-numbers makes it easy to create eye-catching wall art—using a color-coded canvas to guide the way for painting with sparkly resin “diamonds.” Choose from a variety of designs, and get ready for your teen to be dazzled. \$34.99–\$59.99



Making it

With more than 50 creative prompts, *You Are An Artist* invites readers to embrace their artistry and have some fun along the way. Even if your teen hasn’t heard of author Sarah Urist Green (host of PBS show “The Art Assignment”), they likely know her husband, author John Green—and now they’ll get to add Sarah’s book to their collection. \$25



No strings attached

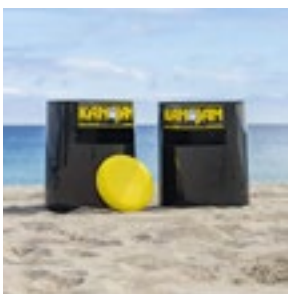
If your teen has always wanted to learn the guitar, the time is now! Start with the Yamaha FG800 acoustic model guitar, specifically made with beginner guitarists in mind. Just add YouTube tutorials, and voila! Future rock star in the mix. \$325

Sunshine Day

Summer may look pretty different this year, but these items keep good old-fashioned outdoor fun within reach.

Jam on it

Move over, disc golf. Kan Jam is sure to be a favorite with Frisbee-loving folks. This two-on-two flying disc game makes for fast-moving fun to keep your teens on the move all summer long. Even better? Get 10% off with code 10YOURTEENKJ. \$39.99



Having a ball

Bocce, anyone? The GoSports 90mm Backyard Bocce Set is your backyard’s next big thing. Teach your kids the art of Italian lawn bowling, and it’s sure to become their new obsession. \$49.99



Nothing but net

A new kind of fun awaits with CROSSNET, the first-ever four square volleyball game. Able to be set up on grass, sand, or even indoors, CROSSNET is a fun outlet for active families and comes with a four-way net, volleyball, pump, and travel backpack. Sure to serve up some smiles! \$149.99

**AMERICA'S #1 MOTIVATIONAL LEADERSHIP
SUMMER PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS AGED 15-27+**

LEAP WEEK 2020

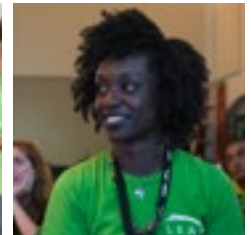
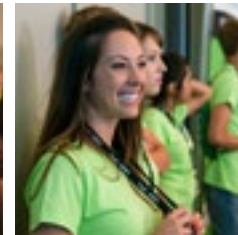
JULY 20 - 24



This summer, LEAP will host the new gold standard for virtual motivational leadership programs for high school and college students.

LEAP Week will be fully interactive. We will feature preeminent Ted and TEDx Speakers, Business Leaders, Celebrities, Philanthropists, Athletes, and others in our BIG Virtual conference rooms.

However for more of a one-on-one experience, smaller groups of students (5-10) will have the ability to break into groups moderated by their team leader throughout the week. Here students will be able to form a cohesive group to break down topics and facilitate deeper conversations.



TOPICS COVERED AT LEAP WEEK:

Goal Setting - Time Management - Self Confidence
Mentorship - Effective Communication - Gratitude
College Prep - Test Prep - How To Land A Job
...and more!

**VISIT WWW.LEAPFOUNDATION.COM/2020
TO LEARN MORE**

FEATURED SPEAKERS



**JASON
ALEXANDER**



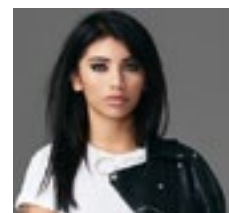
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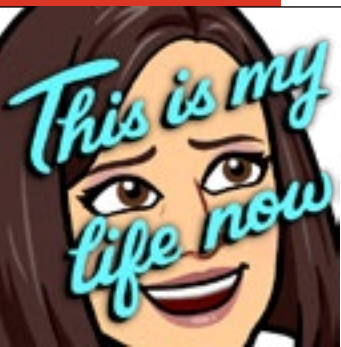
**PAULA
ABDUL**



**KEVIN
OLUSOLA**



**KIRSTIE
MALDONADO**



Among the Losses, A Few Corona-V Wins

Yes, times are tough—but here are a few things that are making me smile.

We all know there are many coronavirus losses—too many to count. Yet, amongst the debris, there have been some coronavirus wins—some small, some insignificant, and some as unpredictable as the havoc this disease has caused.

Let's start with the mundane:

Continuously Working From Home

I have worked from home since Your Teen Media began in 2008. I've had to shush the dog, the (once-little) kids, and even the landscaper noises. Now everyone is working from home, everyone's dog is barking, and disruptions are the new norm. I no longer have to apologize for the dog or the landscapers, and my kids know the drill. Welcome to my world—and yes, I do often have my yoga pants on under the table, beneath the Zoom line of view. The work-from-home movement wrote the handbook on all of this, and we welcomed you with open arms—and we will also be happy when the rest of you return to the office, and we can get some work done in our quiet houses.

Only Family Dinners

These are the best of times, the worst of times. No one has any extracurricular activities—and we are all together for dinner. Every. Damn. Night. If I can only ignore the “is there a dinner plan” question that begins at 3 p.m. daily, I

really do love having all of us together for dinner. It's loud, messy, and the cleanup is extensive, but anyone who knows me knows that I love having “all the birds in the nest.” (Until I don't.)

Rover, The Dog(s)

There is no bigger win than the homeless dogs who have now found new foster or permanent homes. Always ahead of the curve, we adopted Luna three months before the stay-at-home order. My only concern about her is the intense therapy she will need when everyone LEAVES. I realized she has been alone in the house for 2 hours since March 22nd. Two hours. If anyone is thinking about ways to make money post-COVID, doggie psychologist would be an excellent path.

Older Folks Learning Zoom/ Facetime

The beginning was painful—too close to the screen, seeing only the tops of their heads, forgetting to mute when there were many people on the call. Now? Lots of talking between grandparents and grandkids and with long-lost relatives and friends—and lots of reconnecting because suddenly everyone has time.

Nature

The parks have never been fuller. We hike all year long and this year it's like everyone has discovered our state's beautiful parks. Now we look for lesser known trails, and that has opened up new spaces for

us to enjoy. While I am put out that “my” parks have been invaded, I secretly cheer for the beauty of the world and that so many people are now enjoying the outdoors. Let's hope we all remember this—and all the concern about plastic and preserving our beautiful earth. Let's not forget to resurrect that conversation when COVID is gone.

All the Siblings

Annoyance born of proximity reigns among the kids. And yet, left with only each other, the board games, photography sessions, and bonding over shared enemies (us annoying parents) have also reigned. I have witnessed a few shared experiences that I never could have predicted when they were younger kids bickering and throwing each other into walls (true story—I have the photo to prove it). Good thing I don't like gambling, I would have lost that bet.

Viral Laughter

Never. Ending. Laughter. Mostly AT my husband and me—it always starts there. My forgetting which kid I told what, repeating myself, being accused of not listening (did you say something?), and the list goes on. My husband's never-ending stories and his infectious laughter at the same shows he has watched before. All fair game.

Come to think of it, all of the laughter is at us. And you know what? For once, I am (mostly) okay with it. I'll give them this one.

YOUR TEEN

for parents

Did you find this guide helpful?
We hope so! Please take a moment
to share it with a friend!
We're all in this together.

—The *Your Teen* staff

...and for more great advice
on raising teens:

