

## **Preserving Youth's Mental Health During Covid-19 Pandemic**

Since December 2019, covid-19 has spread to 216 countries, and has led to 1.2 million deaths. This pandemic has not only jeopardised the physical health of a large and spread out population, it has also negatively impacted global economic growth, educational systems and many other facets of life. However, it is crucial that people are aware not only of the physical impacts of Covid-19, but also of the mental influence it has been having on people of all ages, especially youth. From online schooling to self-isolation, it has been an extremely difficult time for young people to maintain a positive mental attitude, due to the problems encountered during the pandemic. Fortunately, there are various ways to reduce the impacts on young people's mental health.

Maintaining the mental health and stability of young people has always been a demanding task, and the pandemic has increased these challenges, most commonly because of the loss of direct personal contact, the dramatic change to routines, and the negativity of social media. During such times, young people should bear in mind that being mentally healthy doesn't mean they have to feel cheerful and energetic everyday – it is normal to experience occasional mood swings and break downs in such times. It is important to always remind themselves and those around them that the pandemic will eventually end, and they need to “take the good with the bad” and consider this as a new way of gaining experience.

In order to prevent mental health issues among young people, we need to look at specific issues and challenges and provide alternative solutions for particular issues for particular groups of people, instead of giving out general yet confusing advice. For example, in order for young people to cope with the change in ways of learning during lockdowns and isolations, we could categorise them into different groups and tailor help accordingly. For young children in primary school and kindergarten, the main issue would be the restrictions of movements and fun. Hence, schools could create lists of “to do” activities along with a reward system for children who reach their goals. This would keep them entertained and occupied to reduce stress levels. On the other hand, one of the main issues for senior students would be the pressure of exams during these special times. Undoubtedly, learning online does not result in such high-quality learning as face-to-face, but schools can provide extra resources, help sessions and mock exams to reduce stress. Overcoming challenges by categories and groups will be efficient both timewise and quality-wise.

Another really important way of helping young people's mental health is to “talk and listen”. These two basic actions allow people to express their feelings, receive advice and interact with others. During the lockdowns, the fact that my twin sister and I were able to talk a great deal stabilized our mental health and benefitted our relationship. It is truly a privilege to communicate with people who have experienced and have an

understanding of the same situations. Thus, young people need to be encouraged to use all the various forms of communication that already exist.

Just as a drop of paint spreads out in a container of clear water, one person's mental state can affect many around them. Therefore, instead of stressing out and being pessimistic, we should all start by taking small steps, such as by simply listening to others. Covid-19 can be viewed as a disaster or an adversity, but our perception of it won't reverse the damage it has caused. So why not view it as a learning experience and spread positivity wherever possible?