

## ADOLESCENCE

# 5 Ways to Help Teens Manage Anxiety About the Coronavirus

Adults can help by making sure adolescents don't overestimate the dangers or underestimate their ability to protect themselves.



By **Lisa Damour**

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People of all ages are concerned about the spread of the coronavirus, and teenagers, as a group, tend to experience emotions especially intensely. If you are raising, teaching or otherwise caring for an adolescent who is feeling very nervous about it, here are five things you can do.

## 1. Normalize Anxiety

Anxiety can be healthy. But not all adolescents, or adults, know that it typically acts as a useful and protective emotion. Accordingly, teenagers sometimes fear that their heightened nerves signal the onset of a full-

blown anxiety disorder. They become worried about the fact that they are worried.

Adults can help young people appreciate that healthy anxiety has a purpose: It alerts us to potential threats and helps us move toward safety. “Feeling some anxiety,” we might say calmly, “makes sense right now. You’re having the right reaction to the emerging news about the coronavirus.”

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## The Coronavirus Outbreak

### Wondering About Social Distancing?

Updated March 17, 2020

- **What is social distancing?**

It means minimizing contact with people and maintaining a distance of at least six feet between you and others. Avoid public transportation, limit nonessential travel, work from home and skip gatherings. This strategy saved thousands of lives both during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 and in Mexico City during the 2009 flu pandemic.

- **I’m young. Can I continue to socialize?**

Please don’t. There is no question that older people and those with underlying health conditions are most vulnerable to the virus, but young people are by no means immune. And there is a greater public health

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