

# Make Space, Take Space – Healthy Boundary Setting While Remote Learning



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I am so glad you're here!



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# Workshop Objectives

- To understand your teen by looking behind their behavior.
- To support you in setting healthy boundaries about remote learning and other pandemic related issues.
- Encourage your teens' socialization, self-regulation and agency.
- Increase your teen's resilience.
- Focus on strengthening your relationship with your teen.



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# Guidelines

- We will be together for two hours.
- It would be great if everyone could be on camera.
- Please take yourself off mute if you want to ask a question or make a comment.
- Depending on how many are on the zoom, we may break into chat rooms.



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# These Are Very Challenging and Uncertain Times



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# This Pandemic is a Trauma

- The world as we know it has suddenly and dramatically changed and there is a lot of ambiguity about when things will get back to normal.
- Your teen may fear that something will happen to them, to you or to someone in your family.
- Pandemic conditions are at cross currents with normal adolescent development
- Teens have had to give up so much.
- **It's very difficult to be parenting a teen now.**



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# Racial Injustice

- COVID-19 has brought transparency about the alarming disparities along racial lines in health, education, housing and employment.
- If your teen is a person of color, they may be feeling scared and angry, as the systemic effects of racism are more transparent.
- Many teens feel a responsibility to take action on behalf of social justice, which is further complicated by the pandemic.



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# Generation Z is Not a Monolith

- Teens come from very different backgrounds, personalities and life circumstances.
- Teens who are worried about their basic needs being met are more depressed than those who have more stable financial circumstances.
- For many, the most painful part of the coronavirus crisis is losing important experiences: high school sports seasons, proms, theater productions, high school graduations, working.
- Some will be worried how their futures will be affected by missing activities expected to help them with college applications and scholarships.



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# Let's Remember “Normal” Development

So much was going on with your teen even before Covid-19



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# Normative Developmental Tasks

- Separating from parents is necessary for teens to develop their own identity.
- Viewing parents as boring and peers are important and exciting.
- Questioning parental rules and authority.
- Wanting to have control and not have parents be the “boss of me.”



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# Covid's Impact on Normative Development

- Teens are at home a lot more with their parents.
- They don't have as much freedom to get together with friends.
- They have less control over their lives.
- They have already missed out on so much and the future is so uncertain.



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# The Adolescent Brain



- It takes 25 years for brain to fully develop and for the pre-frontal cortex to be fully on-line.
- When teens are in the emotional part of their brain, their feelings tend to be intense and escalate quickly, and they have less impulse control or sense of consequences.
- This explains a lot about their perplexing, unpredictable and sometimes risky behaviors.
- The pandemic is especially problematic for teenagers who are wired in their brains to think about novelty and pleasure seeking.



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# Who Is This Person?

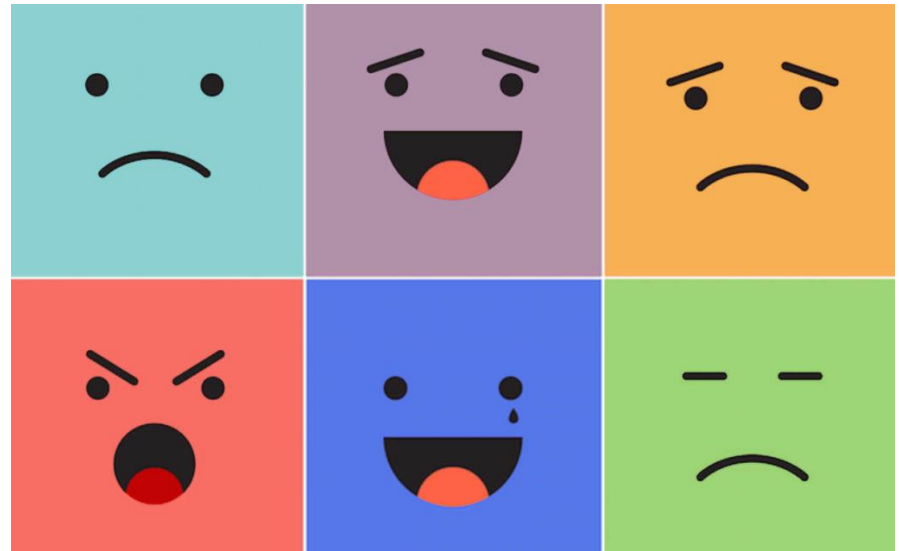
- Impulsive
- Rebellious
- Irritable
- Friend-focused
- Risk taker
- Closed off/non-communicative
- Obsessed with appearance



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# Self-Regulation and Teens

- Self-regulation is having the capacity to manage physical and emotional reactions.
- Depends on their age, emotional maturity and personality.
- Capacity to self-calm when upset.



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# Self Regulation and the Brain

**The Brain = the fist**

**Midbrain/Limbic/Amygdala/Emotional Brain**

= **thumb tucked** where memories and emotions are processed; fight, flight or freeze response.

**Cerebral Cortex / “rational brain”** back of hand

& fingers encasing everything = where higher functioning occurs; logical thinking, kindness, empathy, reasoning and problem solving; significantly impacted by ATTACHMENT)

Dan Siegel, “Parenting from the Inside Out”



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# Self-Regulation and Stress

When teens “flip their lid” their rational brain and emotional brain are not connecting.

Their feelings are **BIG** and intense.

They have less capacity to access the logical, problem-solving brain and/or communicate in a rational way.

Covid could certainly impact whether a teen flips their lid.



Figure 2. Flipping your lid.



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# Personality Types

## Introverts

- Quiet, less outgoing, and more introspective.
- They rely on alone time to rest and recharge after social or stressful interactions.
- They need time alone to self-regulate.
- Some introverts may even feel relieved during Covid that they don't have to be social.

## Extroverts

- Thrive on being outgoing and social
- Recharge by being around others.
- Being in the house and spending so much time alone is challenging and may be dysregulating.



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# Let's Chat



About normal teen  
developmental tasks and  
self-regulation.



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# What is Resilience

Having the wisdom and capacity to persevere and grow from personal experiences even during challenging times.



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# Build Your Teen's Resilience

- It is impossible to completely protect your teen.
- What you can do instead is to prepare them to navigate the world.
- You can support them to develop the inner strengths and relationships that allow them to thrive in good times and rebound (maybe even grow) in these challenging times.



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# Resilience May Be Uneven

- Teens will be able to handle different situations with varied levels of resilience.
- Because they are showing resilience in one situation, doesn't mean that they will "have it together" in another.
- For example, attending school remotely during Covid may present so many challenges that it takes all their energy to keep it together.
- Teens may be more fragile or explosive with family members with whom they feel safest.



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# Resilience Does NOT Mean Being Invulnerable

- Adolescence is a time period when kids have their learner's permit for living.
- They will experience pain and make mistakes.
- Resilience is about learning to manage emotions and self-regulate.
- It is up to parents to “hold” emotions with their teen.
- It is not always helpful to reframe the situation positively.
- As much as possible, however it is important to protect teens from “toxic” stressors, challenges that can be threatening to their developing brains and bodies, such as drugs, abuse, neglect, and violence.



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# Resilience and Control Issues

- Learning to exercise appropriate self-control is a normative task.
- Teens are experiencing a lot less control during Covid.
- It is unrealistic to think teens won't make mistakes.
- It is really difficult to make teens want something they don't want or make them not want something they do want. (Stixrud and Johnson).



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# The Good News about Control

- Teens who are given both limits and the freedom to make their own decisions tend to be more self-driven and self-disciplined.
- Allowing teens to make their own decisions will help them feel some control over their lives and decrease their resistance so that they won't automatically oppose things that are in their own best interest.
- They are more likely to tell themselves “no” before you have to— which makes parenting a lot easier.



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# Step 1

- Establish age-appropriate family rules—like time limits on technology use, and expectations about remote learning and drug and alcohol use—in a supportive, involved way.
- Refrain from dictating the rules; discuss them.
- Of course, you are not enabling dangerous behavior.
- Allows your teen to have a safe space to operate in without becoming overwhelmed by everything they need to do and learn.



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## Step 2

- Allow them to operate freely and autonomously and make decisions within the limits that you set.
- The challenge is to decide what deserves a rule, and what can be left up to a teen—and exactly when to start handing over decision-making.
- This will depend on your teen's personality and their ability to physically and emotionally regulate.



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# Decision-Making Helps to Cultivate Resilience

## The goals of giving teens agency:

- ✓ To encourage teens to look within themselves to understand and own their often-conflicting motivations and feelings.
- ✓ To teach them to consider their own values and the values of their family
- ✓ To help them gain experience making decisions and feeling accountable for the outcome of their decisions.



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# Setting Boundaries to Create/Reinforce Remote Learning

- Give your teen as much agency as possible. Create a schedule with your teen that works with their individual needs and online learning expectations.
- Consider that keeping up with schoolwork can be challenging, especially for those with ADHD, learning disorders or organization issues; they may need more support.
- Set a time to wake up, exercise, shower, get dressed, have breakfast, or whatever they need to start the “school day.”



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# Boundaries & a Realistic Schedule

- Discuss how to build in breaks and times for socializing, exercising and entertainment.
- Encourage responsible "down time" - the space for some quiet time, creative time, music time, or to virtually hang out with friends.
- Make dinner a transition time between the "school day" and the evening.
- Work with your teen to come up with a media plan that they can stick to.



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# Use Screen Time Constructively

- Teens love their phones and tablets, and since they're pretty much a lifeline between teens and their friends, the pandemic may make it difficult to limit screen time.
- Some social media and online time can be used to launch and complete a project, something with a beginning, middle and end that can give teens a sense of accomplishment.
- Teens can start a book club with friends, try dance challenges, learn to play an instrument, photography projects and other activities, based on their interests.



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# An Exercise from the Other's Perspective

- Rather than getting into control battles —parents and teens could try to do some role playing which may help them get unstuck from their point of views.
- Say to your teen: “Let me try to articulate it from your perspective,” and role play trying to express their point of view. You can stop and ask, “What am I missing? What am I not getting here?”
- And then, allow your teen to do the same back to you.



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# Let's Chat about Your Teen and Control



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# Resilience Tips for Teens



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# Encourage Self-Care



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- It is important for teens to connect with their friends, other relatives, coaches, or anyone who is supportive to them.
- Its also important for them to be connected to their community, whether it's a religious group, sports, club, high school group, or a social justice organization.
- It may not always seem like it; your relationship with your teen is extremely important. Allow opportunities for connection.



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# A Hassle-free Zone

- Their room or some space in your home can be designated as their “hassle-free zone”—not that they always have to keep everyone out, but it should be their space - free from stress and anxieties.



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# Encourage Turning It Off

- It is important for your teen to stay informed—but sometimes constant news can add to the feeling that nothing is going right.
- Talk to your teen about the downside of too much information, where ever it comes from - television, newspapers, magazines, or social media.



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# Your Teen Can Help Someone Else

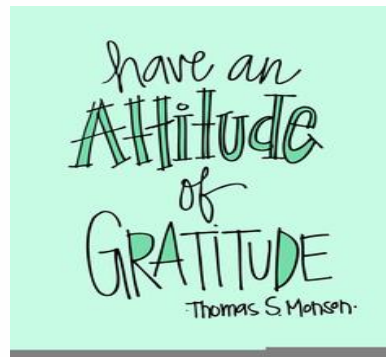
They can volunteer in their community, at their school, they can help a friend with their homework, or work on behalf of a social justice issue.



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# Gratitude Puts Things in Perspective

- Talk to your teen about the important things that have stayed the same, even while the outside world is changing. e.g. their family is still fine, there is a roof over their heads, and they have food to eat.
- Help them identify the small pleasures – catching up on sleep, feeling water on their body in the shower, eating good food, looking at trees, listening to music.



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# Mindfulness Can Help Teens during Covid

- Stressors during Covid-19 and BLM are heightened.
- The uncertainty during these traumatic times may make everything seem even more extreme.
- Teen's emotions might already be all over the map because of hormones and physical changes.
- Mindfulness is a strategy that will help teens manage their reactions and encourage self-compassion.



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# Mindfulness

- Strengthens and builds our capacity to be resilient.
- Encourages us to pay attention in the present moment without judgement.
- Helps us catch negative thought patterns.
- Keeps us from getting stuck on redoing the past or worrying about the future.
- Teaches us to tune into our emotions in any given moment and experience them without judgment..



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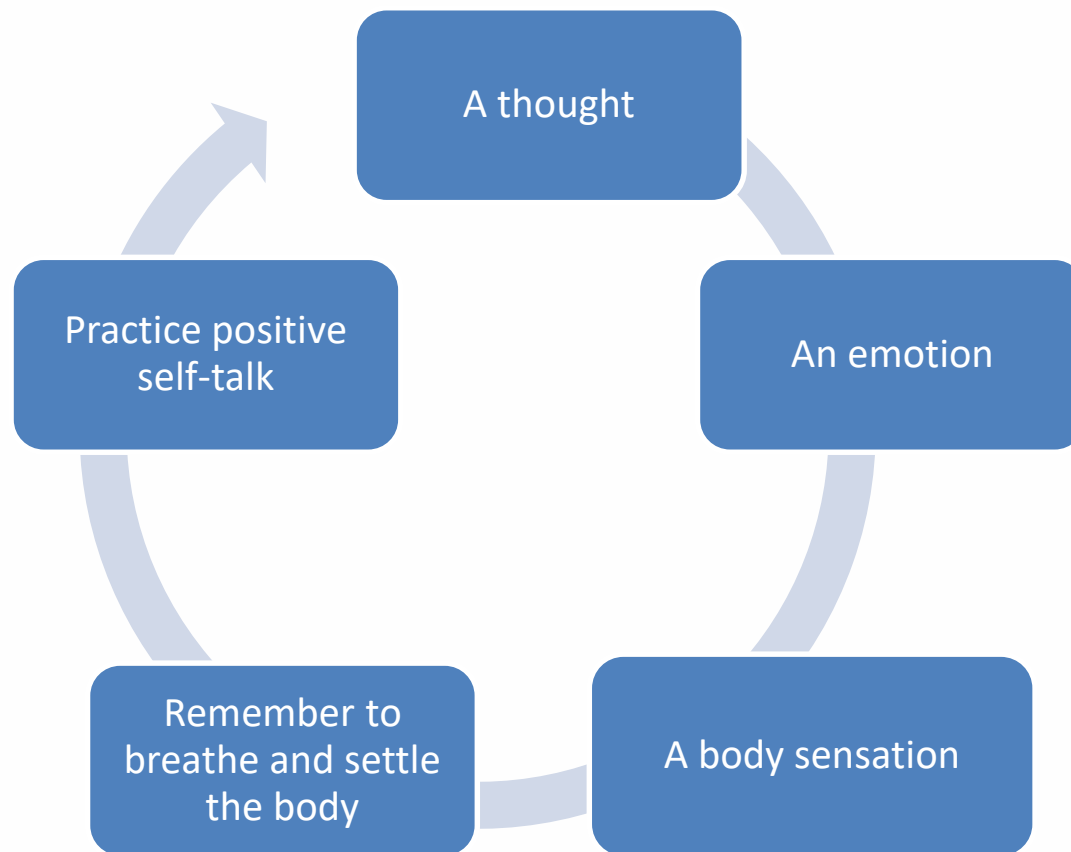
# Practicing Mindful Strategies

- We have between 12,000 and 60,000 thoughts a day.
- Mindfulness help teens deal with the thoughts that may be creating stress for them.
- Your teen can learn to manage their thoughts by practicing being in the present moment when eating, walking, sitting, falling asleep, being with a friend etc.
- Emphasize that they are being mindful and in the present when they're in the "zone"— i.e. playing basketball, running, swimming, drawing, dancing, playing video games – and at one with their body, thoughts and emotions..



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# Unpack Thoughts & Emotions



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# Positive Self -Talk



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# SOLAR – a Mindfulness Practice to Increase Resilience

- **S** = stop the thought
- **O** = observe the thought
- **L** = let it go
- **A** = and
- **R** = return & remember



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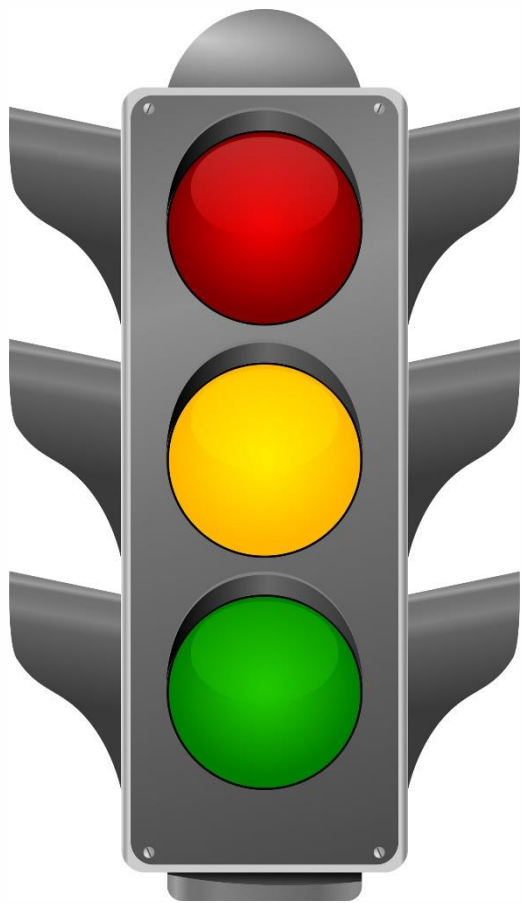
# When to Seek Help for Your Teen

- Sleep changes, such as sleeping more or insomnia.
- Eating a lot more or a lot less
- Signs of self-harm, substance abuse or acting out more than usual.
- Complaints of body aches that aren't due to a physical problem
- Isolating more than normal (for example, eating dinner alone in their room).
- Not participating in activities that normally bring them joy.



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# Let's Talk about Action Steps



**Red:** Something you plan to stop doing

**Yellow:** Something you are curious about

**Green:** Something you plan to start doing



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