

# Take Care, Talk Often, Act Early



The disruption caused by COVID-19 continues to impact young people, not just in terms of isolation and loss of community, but also due to the elimination of some significant rites of passage, including graduation ceremonies, proms, athletic programs, and other milestone moments. Last December, the U.S. Surgeon General issued [a rare public advisory](#) about the sharp decline in our youth's mental health and called for an urgent need to combat this crisis.

During Mental Health Month, Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles offers tips on supporting the mental health and well-being of teens and young adults in our lives.

## Take Care and Teach Good Habits

Whether it's through mindfulness, meditation, or exercise, self-care is important. Adults can teach good habits by:

- **Being a good role model.** Your children learn from example, so be sure to talk about and manage your mental, emotional, and physical health. Exercise has health benefits beyond physical fitness. As little as 20-25 minutes of moderate activity a day has been shown to protect against symptoms of depression.
- **Taking advantage of free tools.** As part of the [Presence of Mind](#) initiative, Kaiser Permanente and Cloud9 teamed up to create free, online tools to reach tens of thousands of young people where they're at — video gaming. These short, interactive training videos provide tools to foster open, nonjudgmental, and honest conversations about mental health.

## Talk Often and Honestly

The sooner and more often you talk with your teen about mental health, the more comfortable the conversations will be for both of you. Start every discussion in a comfortable, distraction-free space, whether it's one-on-one at home or on the drive home from school. You don't need to know everything about mental health and wellness but assure your child that you can learn together.

## Act Early

It may not be obvious that your teen is struggling, so learn the symptoms of mental health conditions so you can act early. The Child Mind Institute's [Symptom Checker](#) is a tool to learn more about your child's behavior by answering a series of questions.

Your teen may be in a mental health crisis if their behavior is very different from normal, if you feel the situation is getting out of control, or if you believe they may harm themselves or others. Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). Or text HOME to 741741 to access the Crisis Text Line.

To learn more, visit [kp.org/mentalhealth](https://kp.org/mentalhealth).