

# COPING WITH CORONANXIETY | MARCH 2020

## THREE THINGS THIS WEEK

### 1. The Sports Void

**What it is:** With more and more sports suspending seasons and canceling tournaments, sports fans everywhere are looking for something to fill the void, and [esports may be just the thing](#).

**Why it's similar:** Since playing video games and watching others play doesn't require one to be in close proximity with others, it's quite possible that esports will become a big interest for teenagers stuck at home. Sure, watching shows or making TikToks may also become more important, but like sports, esports aren't scripted, don't have predetermined outcomes, and are built around the players' personalities. So they may be more enticing for teenagers who were hoping to watch the March Madness drama unfold or who closely follow their fav NBA stars. If your teens are suddenly asking to play more or spend more time on Twitch, Mixer, or even YouTube and TikTok ([#esports](#) is rapidly growing on the platform), this could be why.

### 2. Pandemic Pressure

**What it is:** If you're like us, you've probably seen *lots* of reminders that this time in quarantine is a gift, a chance to finally do all the things! And as well-intentioned as they are, they can also cause a lot of anxiety and dread.

**Why it's misguided:** Reminding ourselves and our kids not to waste all of our time on social media or binge-watching—let's be real—shows we're not even half-interested in is admirable. But saying that now our wildest goals and dreams can be realized because we have a \*month\* off is *pressure*. No matter what a tweet says, you cannot write an entire book in a month. So if you or your teens are feeling like you *must* accomplish something epic to prove you're not a failure, remember that this type of advice gets us focusing on the wrong thing: ourselves. As [this wonderful post](#) from *Rooted Ministry* reminds us, *utilizing* the time to accomplish something is not the same as *redeeming* it.

### 3. Digital Vigilance

**What it is:** With everyone turning to the internet during this time of social distancing, our kids could be more at risk for [targeting by online predators](#).

**Why it's time to be aware:** Perhaps even more than usual (is that possible?!), our digital-native kids will be seeking to connect with others via social media, dating apps (for older kids), and even video games. Many of them will be more

likely to talk to strangers in the hopes of staving off boredom and loneliness, which is a perfect opportunity for predators to swoop in. We don't remind you of this to worry you, but to remind you to be vigilant and prepared, always talking with your kids about their online activity and how to know who to trust. It's also important to enable restrictions on their devices so they can't download apps without your permission. (Check out our Parent Guides to [iOS](#), [Android](#), and [Internet Filtering & Monitoring](#) for more!)

### Spotlight

We know that sometimes it's hard to remember what people even *did* before the internet and streaming, let alone during times of isolation when they had so much time on their hands, so we brainstormed and came up with [14 Things to Do with Teens If You're Quarantined](#). (Don't forget to [subscribe](#) to the blog while you're there so you never miss a post!) And as promised, [here's the link](#) to *The Culture Translator* on Google Podcasts.

## COPING WITH CORONANXIETY

It's not easy being Gen Z. For a generation that is almost always online and already prone to anxiety or depression, a global pandemic can be debilitating. A sudden crisis like Covid-19 can overload their maturing emotional operating system, leading our children into bouts of [hysteria](#). Unfortunately, things look like they will get [much worse](#) before they get better.

So, as a family, what can you do to reduce the noise leading your kids to new levels of stress and angst? In addition to "[social distancing](#)," here are six practical things you can do right now to cope with this ongoing crisis.

1. **Limit Exposure:** If your teen is glued to social media for the latest, breaking alerts, give them a limit for how much time they can spend online each day during this crisis (utilize [Apple's Screen Time](#) or [Android's Digital Wellbeing](#) for this!).
2. **Check the Source:** If you or your child are only getting news from Twitter, Facebook, or even your favorite news outlet, find other credible sources that tend to be less biased, like the [CDC](#) or [WHO](#).
3. **Go Outside:** Simply taking a walk in the woods can alleviate stress by connecting us with God's good creation. Notice the trees and the buttercups, are you not cared for [more than these](#)? As environmentalist John Muir wrote, "[Everybody needs beauty](#) as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."
4. **Just Read:** Nothing invites your children out of their own mood or self-centered story and into the larger world like a great book. Encourage them to read [The Diary of Anne Frank](#) or Corrie Ten Boom's [The Hiding Place](#) to help them realize others have suffered far more than they are currently suffering.

5. **Zoom Zoom:** Schedule a video chat so your kids can stay connected with their buddies.
6. **Pray:** Spend 10 minutes each morning or evening praying as a family. To help guide your time, check out [The Daily Office app](#) for daily Scripture and prayers to pray together.

## 8 PREMIUM INSIGHTS

A broader look at the world that teens inhabit.  
Skim our summary or click the links to read more.  
Engage your teens in conversation about their world.

### THEY SAID IT BEST:

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”—attributed to **Corrie Ten Boom**

## TECHNOLOGY

### *APPS/WEBSITES*

1. This week in TikTok: “[Self-Isolation Content](#)” appears to have become a form of self-soothing for teens who love the quick-hit video app. Teens are sharing the ways that they’re keeping themselves occupied during middle school, high school, and college shut downs by learning new dances to songs like “Supalonely” and making jokes about online learning. TikTok claims they have put measures in place so that the content under #coronavirus is vetted and doesn’t spread rumors or false information. It also recently came to light that TikTok [filters their algorithm](#) so that people who don’t fit conventional beauty standards don’t get any views, so don’t think for a second that the app’s a source of healthy information—though scrolling through TikToks can be a nice change of pace from the doom and gloom elsewhere.

2. The other platform teens are living on in the midst of the pandemic is one you may have used before (or currently) for work video conferences. Zoom has become the go-to for teens who aren’t currently able to participate in their normal routine and are looking for a hit of social interaction. As [The New York Times reports](#), teens are creating free Zoom accounts and spending hours simulating social gatherings like sorority mixers and art shows. A Facebook group called “Zoom Memes for Self-Quaranteens” has exploded overnight, and “Gen Z” may have even rebranded permanently to being called “Zoomers.”

## POP CULTURE

## **FILM/TV/STREAMING**

3. Many people are now discovering a Google Chrome browser extension called "[Netflix Party](#)," which allows anyone to stream Netflix shows in a live, chat-room type environment. The extension syncs up content so that everyone in the "party" is watching the same thing at once. For kids stuck inside without much to do, these parties may count as a meaningful (and important) social interaction for your teens for the foreseeable future.

4. Chances are, your teen is streaming pandemic content. Films like *Contagion* (2011) and *28 Days Later* (2002), as well as the Netflix docuseries *Pandemic* (released January 2020) are all trending as people try to access entertainment that makes sense of our current moment. Remind your teen that regardless of what's going on in the world, it's okay to take a break and consume something lighthearted or even shut off streaming media to remind ourselves that God is in control. Even the creators of these series urge users to [watch with caution](#).

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

5. Kylie Jenner has urged her followers to stay home and "self-quarantine," as she claims to have been doing. Of course, it's probably made a lot easier when you're living in a giant mansion in Calabasas with a private chef, but thank you, Kylie! Jenner is just the latest in a string of higher profile Gen Z celebrities to urge followers to isolate, and there are sure to be more as the U.S. Surgeon General has [publically called on](#) influencers to use their platforms to call for isolation. Your teen is either fully invested in social distancing as a result of popular media—or they may be fully resistant to it.

## **TRENDING/MEMES**

6. Gen Z has been getting quite a bit of negative press this week as determined spring breakers head to beaches en masse and continue to gather in groups, even as the CDC and Trump administration roll out guidelines against it. The (short-lived) [#coronaviruschallenge](#) even showcases teens licking dirty surfaces at airports to show how little they are fazed by the virus. *TheWall Street Journal* has gone so far as to flag it as a "[generational war](#)," with older folks and Generation Z resistant to social distancing, while Millennials and Generation X seem open to the idea of it. Don't give in to the rhetoric that pits the teens in your house against you. Remember that teens tend to feel immortal, and try to use compassion as you talk to them about how your family will respond to the virus.

## **TEEN CULTURE**

### **POSITIVE THINGS**

7. The cancellation of the NCAA March Madness tournament didn't stop [some college students](#) from getting creative and hosting their own "March Madness" series in their mother's basement. If your teen (or you!) are missing college basketball, it's worth checking out for a laugh. It's also a good reminder of what's so great about most of Gen Z—they're always looking for something to smile about, even in anxious circumstances.

## TIP OF THE WEEK

8. *High School Musical* star Vanessa Hudgens had an unfortunate gaffe on social media this week when she [spoke to her followers](#) over Instagram Live. In a sorority-girl falsetto, Hudgens rolled her eyes and admitted that, "Sure, people are gonna die—which is unfortunate, but inevitable." Her message—that the public was overreacting to the threat of the virus—wasn't so abrasive as her tone-deaf delivery, which suggested that the star doesn't place a high value on the lives of vulnerable people. (Ironically, she also stars in a movie called *Spring Breakers*.) Hudgens has tried to walk her comments back, but it's too late, she's a [meme](#) (*language!*).

One good thing, though, is that Hudgens' comments provide an opportunity to talk about how we can care for the least of these with our words and our attitudes, how flippancy and disrespect never play very well for a large audience, and how just because we have the ability to say something to lots of people doesn't always mean we should.

## KEEP THE FAITH!