

How am I surviving the Covid-19 pandemic?

An open letter to parents

By Eshal Sajid

Parents: YOU GOT THIS!

We, your kids, want you to know that you are all doing an amazing job and we want to say thank you! We are really grateful for your love, your support and your time. However, we do have a few things to say to you - which will make both yours and our lives easier at home. So hold on tight and read on!

I am a 15 year old girl and I conducted a study to find out the experiences of young people living through the current COVID-19 pandemic. The study is titled **“COVID-19: What does it mean for my family and I? A journey through the eyes of a child”**. It was conducted on behalf of [UCL PACT Network](#), a network made to support parents and carers at University College London. The study explores the experiences of young people (aged 12-16 years) and their families of the global pandemic of COVID-19 through surveys and focus groups

We found the following things matter the most to us and here, we share our wisdom with you:

1. Routine (or lack of!) “I need a routine - I’ll spiral out of control if I don’t have one”

What we found: This was the most important finding of our study. Over 90% children said that they need some form of routine while staying at home.

What you can do:

Parents, talk to us about our routines and include us in your discussions. Keep it flexible, so it works for us all. Try having a set wake-up and sleep time, but let us plan the day ourselves so we can learn how to manage our own time and workload.

2. Screen time (If you can’t beat them join them!) “Screens have overtaken our entire lives.”

What we found: All of the children admitted their screen time has gone up a lot, and 80% of parents worried their kids were spending too much time on screens.

What you can do: Accept that your child will be on screens more than usual, but remember to check in on them and prompt them to take a break every once in a while (e.g. coming downstairs for a while to sit with family, or going out for a walk, or doing something else they enjoy such as baking, cooking, origami etc). Watch our favourite shows with us! And have movie nights together, we love to spend time with you and laugh and cry at the same time!

3. Spending time together (or not!) *“No time like the present!”*

What we found: All the children and parents thought the lockdown was the best time to spend time with each other, but being stuck in a house together all the time isn't easy.

What you can do: Make sure that your kid has a place where they can be alone, and remember they are going to want their own space. Plan some time together and organise fun activities (like a movie night or going out for a walk) to do together twice a week or more. Let's use a rota to pick activities that everyone can enjoy.

4. Exercise (indoors vs outdoors) *“My parents keep forcing me into the garden and I know it's good for me but I'd rather do an ab workout.”*

What we found: We found that 70% young people preferred doing exercise inside their homes, using an online workout routine. However, adults preferred going out for walks and runs.

What you can do: Do exercise together, and encourage your child to find something they enjoy. Try incorporating it into your daily routine - use family challenges, like who can hold a plank for the longest time! If your teen doesn't like exercise, let them go without it for a bit - they'll soon realise how important it is for their mental and physical health.

5. Go easy on us! *“Parents seem to forget that it's hard for us too!”*

What we found: All young people that we spoke to, felt like too much was being expected of them from school, parents and friends.

What you can do: It is not easy for teens to adjust from school learning to home learning. They have lost routine, lost touch with friends and lost the glorious days of life on the school campus. If they don't do schoolwork for a day, remember that's okay! It is hard to feel productive at home, and we are doing the best we can. Relax some of your stricter rules, let us stay up a little later or sleep a little longer!

6. Checking in *“There are so many distractions around me - it's basically impossible to stay focused!”*

What we found: 95% of young people said it was hard for them to stay focused at home because of all the distractions around them.

What you can do: As an adult, it's sometimes hard to remember to check in on your teen in their room while you're busy at work, but remember they can get easily sidetracked! Just a quick text message if you don't have the time to go to them would get them back on track.

So there we are! I have tried to summarise all the things that are important to us and hopefully, this short letter helped you learn more about what you can do to help your child! I want to say thank you to all the parents, and all children who participated in the study. If you would like more information about the research study, please contact me (Eshal Sajid) at sajideshal@gmail.com



COVID-19 THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD



65%

thought of their
COVID-19 experience
negatively

65%

thought their
parents could do
more to help them



70%

are most looking forward
to meeting friends and
going to school again

85%

do not enjoy
working from
home



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
SAJIDESHAL@GMAIL.COM