

Israeli Youth talk about: the COVID-19 Crisis

Advice, Thoughts and Coping in a Time of
Emergency and the new routine

המועצה הלאומית לשלום הילד
Israel National Council for the Child
المجلس الوطني لسلامة الطفل



Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has had a profound influence on health, the world of work and society and life's daily routine, in the whole world, including Israel.

Starting in March 2020, various restrictions and prohibitions were published in directives, with the objective of halting the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in Israel. Many sections of the new directives impacted young people and children in particular. So, amongst other things, the educational frameworks were closed down; entrance to parks, playgrounds and leisure centers was prohibited; afterschool activities and sports were cancelled; social meetings outside of the nuclear family were restricted. In addition, children and teenagers were exposed to the wider implications of the COVID-19 crisis, including the need to cope with their parents' lack of employment security, non-availability of certain services, worries about their health and the health of their families, and an overall feeling of uncertainty and worry. However, recently, there has been a gradual relaxation of some of the restrictions, but we are still in an emergency situation, and children and teens are still faced with a new and unknown normalcy.

Despite these difficulties and the great shaking-up that they are going through now, children and teens have not received enough attention, and their views have not been heard in the different discussions. So they have not been participants in the decision making process, they have not been asked about their needs, their desires, their ways of coping with the new normalcy. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR), which Israel signed in 1990, obliges the state to take all steps necessary to ensure children's rights, maintain their wellbeing and listen to what they have to say.

In order to fulfill the convention, to lay the foundations for the participation of youngsters, to develop peer instruction, by youngsters for youngsters, during the COVID-19 crisis with the objective of allowing the best possible future arrangements for them, the Israel National Council for the Child has invited youngsters from all over the country, boys and girls, to listen and to express their opinions. This is a first step in understanding the reality and the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, through the eyes of youngsters, and in their own words. The findings that have been brought for you here, present the youngsters' thoughts on COVID-19, their advice on coping and building up resilience in the light of the current situation, and in emergencies, in general.

As always the answers and the proposals from the youngsters were interesting, eye-opening and inspiring. We, in the Israel National Council for the Child will continue to act to ensure that children and teens will be given a place, a voice and an influence in everything connected to their lives.

Participants

About 60 boys and girls. About 60% 7th – 9th grade, 40% 10th – 12th grade, from all over Israel



Young people and the COVID-19 crisis

Boys and girls share

COVID-19 has changed my daily life in...



Disruption of familiar routine



Boredom; nothing to do.



Difficulty in maintaining and developing social connections;



Fear and stress;



Difficulty in keeping up study levels, and fulfilling assignments



Reinforcing ties with the nuclear family



Tensions at home



Difficulties around the distance from friends and the wider family

The feelings is as if everything has changed in a second. Suddenly our lives are abnormal; we don't meet our friends; we don't go to school. COVID-19 has changed our daily routine

COVID-19 had a positive impact on my contact with my family

COVID-19 sows fear about my family's health; distances me from my friends and wider family.

COVID-19 has given me time to read and to learn something new every day

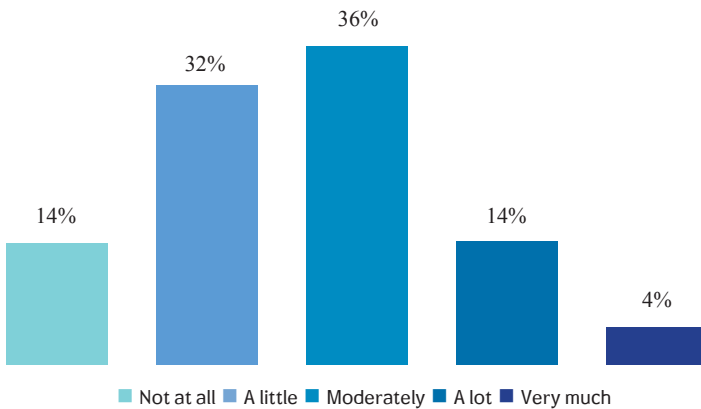
COVID-19 has a negative impact on my life and on the lives of those around me. I don't feel comfortable; I am afraid.



What goes on in their heads when they talk about COVID-19:



In your opinion was sufficient attention given to your needs when decisions were taken about COVID-19:



Boys and girls share

What could have helped you during the COVID-19 crisis:



Recommendations for a schedule and interesting things to do at home (64.9%)



(Online) contact with friends (50%)



(Online) contact with children in various places in Israel (35.1%)



Remote learning in schools and other frameworks (20.2%)



(Online) answers to questions and consultations (18.1%)



Reduce exposure to news and information on COVID-19 (17%)



To receive explanations on COVID-19 in language that is a simple and friendly (14.0%)



(Telephone) answers to questions and consultations (11.7%)



Most of the participants emphasized the importance of maintaining social ties and frameworks and the need for answers and consultations, adapted for children and young people..



Youngsters for youngsters : Advice for COVID19 period

Selected tips for an extended stay at home and coping with schedule changes:

Schedule:

Plan a schedule; create a framework that suits you. Get dressed in the morning; don't wear pajamas all your life.

Hobbies:

Take on new hobbies, or invest in, and improve your old hobbies (recommendations: sport, music, art, cooking, etc.)

Enjoy the holiday; it is an opportunity to get to know, and to open up to your family

Free time:

Make use of the time for playing, reading, art, etc.

Studying

Study something new that you do not study at school (a new language, skills, something that interests you)

Family Time

Strengthen communications with your parents and your siblings, at home, and don't forget to talk to your grandparents and the extended family

Friends

Maintain contact and speak to friends – by telephone, video, or outside (according to the directives)

"My advice is the knowledge that when you stay at home, you are protecting yourself, and even more so, your family and those around you".

Sport

Do sport; at home and outdoors (according to the directives)

"For every negative there is a positive". And the plus in this period is the opportunity to do new things, to work on yourself and to reinforce your ties with your family".

Health

Observe the Ministry of Health directives. Eat healthy food, and, in particular, make sure to eat breakfast

"If only I had time"

To finish things that you always wanted to do, but put off because there was "no time" (Organize pictures, tidy the closet).

Look to other people

Find opportunities to contribute and do stuff for society, for causes that are important to you (community, environment)

"Learn something new, something that you like, something for you. You can find a lot about learning languages, learning drawing and art, learning to play a musical instrument, and it is all free. So, use your time to find new hobbies. Also, for children over the age of 16, I recommend volunteering in your area, or within the family alone (of course, as long as you are not in a risk group)".



Boys and girls share

How to cope with increased exposure to news, changing directives and stressful information:

Reduce exposure to the news and to publications about COVID-19

Ask your parents or a close friend for support and calm

Ask your parents to update you and to explain about COVID-19, instead of exposing yourself directly to the news

Make sure that you only listen to news from reliable sources; do not believe everything that you hear.

Look for “good” news, and updates not connected to COVID-19.

Work on positive thinking and try to take things in the right proportion.

“Everyone reacts differently to information; everyone has different feelings. If you are stressed try to expose yourself to the news as little as possible, and do things that divert your attention.”

“In my opinion, young people need to be aware of the situation; you cannot run away from it, do not sit in front of the news all day; listen to updates once in a while from the app, but do not spend too much time on it”.

“Go to an adult and tell him how you feel. I am sure that they will help you, support you, calm you down”.

“Understand that the media are an important part of democracy, but, sometimes, they go to extremes. Take everything in proportion”.

“Only expose yourself to good, cheerful information”.

“Remember that we are one of the countries in the best situation regarding COVID-19. And remember that some time it will come to an end”.



Looking forward, The National Council for the Child will:

- ➡ **Act** to promote and to spread the concepts and the advice of young men and women – both for children and teens, and also for policy makers and the general public.
- ➡ **Amplify** our efforts for the recognition of the difficulties, the needs and the challenges of children and teens during the COVID-19 crisis, by the relevant parties.
- ➡ **Continue** to give a voice to young men and women, to participate, to voice their positions and to provide a stage for their ideas for coping in emergency situations, and in the new normalcy.

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