

While high school students may rejoice at any unexpected shutdown for the first few days, by day 3 or 4 the novelty probably wore off. If other social outlets are also closed, you get bored teenagers. Really, really, bored teenagers.

Here are some ways you can keep your teen – and yourself – sane for the duration:

1. **Devices.** Set limits on screen and device time. Without the social contact that comes with going to school every day, teens may turn to their electronic devices to keep them company. Though more screen time is okay, and for many teens, messaging with their friends may ease their sense of isolation, do your best to set limits, especially at night. If your teen doesn't cooperate, institute simple, clear consequences – and follow through on them every time.
2. **Academics.** It's important for your teen to keep on doing schoolwork. You don't have to be the teacher, but you do need to ensure your teen keeps up with all assignments.
3. **Personal enrichment.** Learn to play an instrument. There are lots of free, web-based instruction classes for beginners. Some music teachers offer virtual 1-on-1 instruction via video conference.
4. **Home Projects.** If you're home from work as well, you get to work on home-improvement projects you put off. Get your teen to help you with these. Not only will they feel useful and productive, but they'll be pleased you trust them enough to ask for help or advice.
5. **New skills.** Study a trade, art, graphics, computers, coding, or app development. How about hairstyling or makeup? Stock trading? Baking? Encourage them to learn whatever interests them – especially if they're not particularly interested in typical academics. Some sites (including universities) have free trials so your teen can see if they enjoy a subject before committing to it. Or try free lessons on YouTube. Your teen may find a lifelong hobby, passion, or business idea!
6. **Exercise.** Whether it's shooting hoops in the driveway, kicking a ball in the backyard, running on the treadmill, or doing basic calisthenics, there are endless ways to stay active while home. Exercise releases endorphins and keeps your teen healthy while keeping depression and anxiety at bay. If your teen is an athlete, they may be immensely disappointed that their usual sport isn't available, and give up practicing. Validate their feelings. Don't push them to practice right away – they'll come back around when ready.

7. **Food!** If you're at home, too, try to cook or bake together. Let your teen try their hand at their favorite recipes. Yes, the kitchen may look like a tornado hit it afterward, but you get a homecooked meal while they build life skills. Praise them for their efforts and talent. Then, dig in. Studies show that eating meals together with family helps prevent mental health issues and promotes emotional and psychological wellbeing for the whole family.
8. **Make a schedule** and stick to it. Regular bedtimes, wake-up times, and mealtimes.
9. **Yard work.** They could offer to rake a few yards in the neighborhood, too. Remind them not to expect payment, as so many people are facing financial hardships right now.
10. Organize a **"Lawn Concert"**. Neighborhood musicians can set up outside with a friend or two and perform for neighbors. Think of it as springtime caroling!
11. **Foster a dog or cat.** Check with local shelters or rescue groups and see if they have any animals in need of fostering. This might be a way to help the animals socialize and help your teen learn about the responsibility of a pet.
12. **Take a virtual museum tour** – TOGETHER! Many cultural centers like museums, zoos, aquariums and theatres offer live stream talks and tours for free.
13. **Game Night** – When was the last time you pulled out the old Scrabble board or Monopoly game? You might be surprised about the fun and conversations you will have.
14. **Make Kindness Postcards.** Download and print or create your own cards with uplifting messages and leave them in neighbors' mailboxes. If you like, include your contact information so anyone in need of support can contact you.
15. **Journal or Scrapbook current events.** COVID has been a dramatic event in world history. To have a physical record of what they were feeling and some news articles (and memes, too) might help them process what is happening. It will also give a unique historical record of events for your family.
16. **Teach "Adulthood" Skills.** Show your teen how to pay a bill or balance a checkbook. Explain interest rates and why they are fluctuating. Show them how to cook a favorite meal or how to make a grocery list. You could even show them how you file taxes!

17. **Volunteer to Run Errands:** If they have a driver's license, they could offer to pick up groceries for someone who may not want to (or be able to). Charities with meal delivery programs may need help. Just be sure to provide them your teen with a face mask and gloves, and be sure they wash their hands asap when done.

Sources: That Girls Blog; Eight Things To Do With Your Teen