

Supporting youth and preventing boredom during COVID-19



Supporting Indigenous wellness during COVID-19

This fact sheet is part of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's commitment to provide culturally-grounded and strength-based supports for First Nations people during COVID-19. These resources can provide guidance as our communities navigate the current global health crisis, while continuing to face existing health challenges, including substance use and mental health issues.

The brains of youth are still under development, and adults are the construction crew to help facilitate that development.

We have to move youth from boredom to a place of acceptance that Covid-19 is happening, so they gain understanding about the importance of physical distancing and not gathering in groups. We can then help them get interested in other ways of doing things.

'FAKE IT TIL YOU MAKE IT'

One tool we all have is laughter. Laughter is good medicine, as it releases endorphins. It makes us feel good because it lessens our most painful emotions: fear, anger and resentment. Laughter can help prevent further tension between youth and adults. It helps move youth toward being interested and seeing things differently. Laughter aims to develop our joyfulness in life.

- Joyfulness is the unconditional commitment to have fun despite everything that is happening in the context of COVID-19. If youth feel joy, they're more likely to engage in doing something good. When they feel good, they want to do good things. Emotion creates emotion.
- When youth are engaged in life, and feel joy, they are in a healthier state of being. We can nurture this state of being through a connection to culture, meditation and prayers, cooking, crafts, and helping others.
- A strong belly laugh relieves fear and anxiety, breaks down barriers to allow us to discuss things, boosts our immune system, improves respiration and circulation, and relaxes our whole being.

HOW CULTURE AND CONNECTION WITH FAMILY HELP MANAGE BOREDOM

- Belief and prayer can help manage boredom. We need to feel connected. We need ongoing support that we can depend upon. Right now that may be through virtual connections or phone calls.
- Singing is a good practice for learning to manage boredom, increase self-awareness of negative thinking through positive activity. Music stimulates all regions of the brain which strengthens balance and functioning between thinking and feeling.
- We can't ignore risky situations young people face. Ask them about what's happening in their life. Are there challenges in the place they normally call home? We have to give them information about COVID-19 and perhaps how to manage substance use.

Tips to support youth and their mental health

- Ask questions around what's going on in their lives and support their feelings. Give clear messaging about Covid-19, the need for physical distancing, how to take care of themselves.
- Help them understand that working from home is not the same as going to school. Create a schedule, encourage E-learning, self-study. Choose a different topic each day to prevent boredom.
- Give young people their space. Not having a change of scenery can result in boredom. Encourage going out on the water or on the land to help them connect to culture.
- Encourage different ways to connect socially with their friends or a trusted adult or Elder (zoom, house party apps, phone calls).
- Have them do yard work for an Elder or deliver food baskets to someone who is isolated. When we support young people to be helpful it raises their sense of optimism and hope and gives them a sense of meaning.
- Encourage their use of skills around technology. This gives them meaning and purpose, which reduces physical and emotional pain and improves their immune system.

REFERENCES

Hopkins, Carol, and Restoule, Brenda. (2020). *First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Townhall, April 9, 2020.* Retrieved from: <http://ihtoday.ca/townhall/#6>