



AWARENESS

YOUNG AND BRAVE

Traditionally, International Youth Day is held on the 12th August each year as an incentive by the United Nations that celebrates young people, recognising the challenges they face and the contributions that they make.

Against the backdrop of a global crisis

Teenagers have become essential members of society, where since the outbreak of COVID-19, many have had to take on what would normally be considered adult roles, in order to help support their families – physically, mentally and emotionally. At the same time, they have had to make sacrifices to adapt to new ways of behaviour and restrained social interactions.

Considering how adolescents have been impacted, the passage below from an article that featured in the Sydney Morning Herald, puts things into perspective: *“When they should be packing for their overseas school trips, preparing for class excursions, and exploring romantic and intimate relationships, our teenagers are having to miss out. For them, this year at least, there will be no school camps, no concerts or music festivals, and no touching. They have lost some of those fundamental rites of passage that contribute to their transition to adulthood.”*

Helping our youth cope with “social distancing blues”

Due to the effects of isolation at a particularly vulnerable age, we need to support our tweens and teens as best we can.

A report by Michigan University gives these tips for helping teens to cope with “social distancing blues”: -

- 1. Find other ways to celebrate** Nothing can replace celebrating a birthday milestone with a big party, one’s matric dance or graduation. Although many events like these may have been cancelled or postponed, it’s still very important to mark their significance and explore virtual substitutes to connect with friends and family.
- 2. Acknowledge their feelings** Try to be empathetic rather than dismissive of their frustrations, moods and emotional outbursts.
- 3. Tell them that they are brave** and not alone in this, but also watch out for signs of depression, such as sleeping during the day, persistent sadness and withdrawal.
- 4. Follow their lead on shared activities** It’s not often that older kids will want to hang out with their parents, but given their limited choice for company, this may be a great opportunity for you to bond in new ways. “Even if they want you to listen to a new song you think sounds horrible, keep an open mind. Meet the teen where they are.”

So, find a reason and find a way – let’s not forget to celebrate international youth day!