



# Telehealth Tips for Teens and Young Adults

COVID-19 has been tough on everyone, especially people dealing with mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. And with pandemic restrictions in place, it can be harder than ever to find help when you need it.

If you're looking for support for your mental health, you may have considered telehealth, which just means healthcare that's accessed remotely. But does it work for mental health issues? What does it look like in practice? And how do you know if it's right for you?

In this guide, we've got tips on understanding telehealth and getting the support you need, plus new data on how telehealth has been helping teens during the pandemic.

To learn more about telehealth, check out our 2020 Children's Mental Health Report ([childmind.org/2020report](http://childmind.org/2020report)).

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## How does telehealth work?

Telehealth is any treatment in which a professional provides care via technology. There are lots of different options, including:

- Live video calls
- Phone calls
- Text chat
- Mobile health apps
- Electronic prescriptions

Telehealth sessions can look different depending on what you need support with. But telehealth psychotherapy sessions usually look like in-person ones, except that you talk to your provider from home instead of at their office.

Research has shown that telehealth can successfully provide several kinds of mental health support, including:

- **DIAGNOSIS:** If you are struggling, you can get an evaluation via telehealth and, if necessary, receive a diagnosis and treatment plan.

- **ONGOING SUPPORT:** Telehealth can help you manage ongoing mental health challenges through regularly scheduled sessions with a professional.
- **MEDICATION MANAGEMENT:** If you take medication for mental health purposes, telehealth can give you the option of coordinating prescriptions remotely.

Telehealth has been shown to be an effective treatment option for common mental health issues including anxiety, depression, ADHD, eating disorders, OCD and suicidality.

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## What are the advantages of telehealth?

Telehealth can make it easier to get quality mental health care in several important ways.

“He would say he liked talking to someone and expressing his feelings.”

- **ACCESS TO PROVIDERS:** Telehealth can make it easier to find the right provider for you. For example, if you want to see someone who has experience working with LGBTQ+ or BIPOC teens, you might find more options through telehealth than you would in just your geographic area.
- **SCHEDULING:** Without having to travel, it can be easier to schedule appointments at times that work for you, and show up for all your sessions.
- **COMFORTABLE SETTING:** Some people find that getting treatment from home is just more comfortable. Talking to a mental health provider from your bedroom or couch might make it easier to open up about the challenges you're facing.

**REAL-LIFE PERSPECTIVES**

In a recent survey, we asked parents of kids and teenagers who have used telehealth how their children would describe the experience. Here are some of the positives they mentioned:

- “He would say he liked talking to someone and expressing his feelings.”
- “I think she felt it has been helpful to talk with an outside person about current issues. She had a chance to talk through feelings and come up with a plan of action.”
- “Convenient”
- “Enjoyable and beneficial”

This survey was conducted in September 2020.

You can access the full results at: [www.ipsos.com/en-us/parents-children-telehealth](http://www.ipsos.com/en-us/parents-children-telehealth)

## What are the drawbacks of telehealth?

Some aspects of telehealth can be tricky. Here are a few issues that might come up if you decide to pursue telehealth:

- **LEGAL BARRIERS:** Each U.S. state has its own licensing requirements for healthcare professionals. Many loosened these requirements during the pandemic, but the rules are in flux and it might be hard for you to get treatment from a provider who doesn't live in your state.

“She enjoyed it but she enjoys her sessions in person a lot more.”

- **INSURANCE:** Insurance coverage for telehealth has expanded during the pandemic, but policies are changing quickly, and your coverage may not include telehealth.
- **TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES:** If your internet connection is unstable (or if the device you're using to connect is acting up), your sessions might get interrupted.
- **PRIVACY:** Noisy siblings, rowdy roommates, crowded apartments — depending on your living situation, it can be hard to find a quiet, private spot at home for telehealth sessions.

**REAL-LIFE PERSPECTIVES**

In a recent survey, we asked parents of kids and teenagers who have used telehealth how their children would describe the experience. Here are some of the negatives they mentioned:

- “At the beginning it was boring, but got better later.”
- “He told me he did not like it. He wanted to see the doctor in person.”
- “Boring, tiring.”
- “She enjoyed it but she enjoys her sessions in person a lot more.”

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## Is telehealth right for you?

Telehealth might be a good option for you if:

- **IT'S DIFFICULT TO ATTEND IN-PERSON SESSIONS:** If you need to be extra-cautious about going out right now, or you don't have a reliable way to get to appointments, telehealth can be a great option.
- **YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE FINDING THE RIGHT PROVIDER:** Maybe there aren't any specialists in your area, or you want to work with someone who understands your cultural background. Telehealth can increase the odds of finding someone who's the right fit.
- **YOU AREN'T COMFORTABLE WITH IN-PERSON SESSIONS:** If you're nervous or embarrassed about seeking support or you might not feel safe visiting a provider's office in person, telehealth might be more comfortable.

## Tips for getting telehealth treatment

Once you've decided to explore telehealth, there are lots of resources to help you get support. Here are a few places to start:

- **PARENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHER ADULTS YOU TRUST:** Talking with a trusted adult is a great way to figure out what kind of support might be most helpful for you and get guidance for your search.
- **CURRENT PROVIDERS:** If you already see someone, you can ask if they offer remote options or know of any colleagues who might.
- **DOCTORS:** Any doctors you see for medical care can be helpful resources. They may keep a list of local providers you can check with.
- **YOUR INSURANCE PROVIDER:** Often your insurance provider will have a searchable database of in-network providers. Some even have the ability to filter by providers who offer remote services.

- **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NONPROFITS:** Search for professional organizations and nonprofits associated with the type of care you're looking for. Many offer directories of providers. Here are a few to get you started:

**American Psychological Association**  
[www.apa.org/](http://www.apa.org/)

**American Psychiatric Association**  
[finder.psychiatry.org/](http://finder.psychiatry.org/)

**Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)**  
[chadd.org/professional-directory/](http://chadd.org/professional-directory/)

**National Eating Disorders Association**  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/)

**Autism Speaks**  
[www.autismspeaks.org/](http://www.autismspeaks.org/)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**  
[findtreatment.samhsa.gov/](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/)

No matter how you find your provider, remember that you're looking for high-quality care and a good fit. Here are some questions you can ask potential telehealth providers:

- What kinds of treatment do you typically offer?
- What does a typical telehealth session look like?
- How do you make sure that telehealth sessions are private and secure?
- Do you accept my insurance?
- How much do sessions cost? Do you offer a sliding scale?
- Do you offer free initial phone consultations?

## Making the most of telehealth

A little preparation goes a long way. Here are a few things you can do before you start telehealth and during your first few sessions to make the process as productive as possible:

- **Set up your space:** Pick a comfortable spot where you'll sit for your sessions and do what you can to make it feel private, whether that's making a "do not disturb" sign for your bedroom door or hanging a curtain to divide a shared space.
- **Clarify boundaries:** If you live with family or roommates, let them know the days and times that you'll need privacy. If you have to have sessions in a shared space, you might ask others in your household to wear noise-cancelling headphones during the session so that you can speak more freely.
- **Do a trial run:** Before your first session, download any software your provider uses and try using it on the same device (laptop, phone, iPad) that you plan to use during sessions. Ironing out tech difficulties first can head off frustration and interruptions later.
- **Stay focused:** A good rule of thumb is to avoid doing anything during telehealth sessions that you wouldn't do in a provider's office. That means no eating, no scrolling through social media, no side conversations. Turning off the sound on your other devices and muting notifications can help you avoid getting distracted.
- **Give it time:** Telehealth might feel strange at first. Acknowledge ahead of time that it might take a couple of sessions to settle in and know that the best way to get through that initial awkwardness is just to stick with it.

### ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

How to Talk to Your Parents About Getting Help  
[childmind.org/article/how-to-talk-to-your-parents-about-getting-help-if-you-think-you-need-it/](https://childmind.org/article/how-to-talk-to-your-parents-about-getting-help-if-you-think-you-need-it/)

How to Support a Friend  
 With Mental Health Challenges  
[childmind.org/article/support-friend-with-mental-health-challenges/](https://childmind.org/article/support-friend-with-mental-health-challenges/)

Managing Social Media Stress With Mindfulness  
[childmind.org/article/social-media-stress-mindfulness/](https://childmind.org/article/social-media-stress-mindfulness/)

How to Help Yourself Get Organized  
[childmind.org/article/how-to-help-yourself-get-organized/](https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-yourself-get-organized/)

### READ THE FULL 2020 CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH REPORT AT [CHILDMIND.ORG/2020REPORT](https://childmind.org/2020report)

**THE CHILD MIND INSTITUTE** is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain and empower parents, professionals and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most.