

5 Ways to Support Youth During the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Credit: Adobe

Part of the [The Coronavirus Outbreak: What You Need to Know Special Report](#)

The COVID-19 crisis has made it pretty much impossible for older adults to provide face-to-face mentoring and support to young people. Still, many nonprofits are scrambling to find ways to connect the generations now.

Here at [Encore.org](#) (a nonprofit focused on bridging the generational divide), we're encouraging people to use virtual means to connect and we're sponsoring conversations and webinars for others to talk about timely solutions.

“During this crisis, it’s more important than ever that older people and younger ones connect,” says Marc Freedman, founder and CEO of Encore.org. “We just have to get more creative about how.”

Our Commitment to Covering the Coronavirus

We are committed to reliable reporting on the risks of the coronavirus and steps you can take to benefit you, your loved ones and others in your community. [Read Next Avenue's Coronavirus Coverage](#).

Here are five ways you can use your experience to support young people and build meaningful intergenerational connections during the pandemic:

1. Provide support via text to young people in crisis. The need for support is becoming acute. A 2019 Pew Research Center survey found that [seven in 10 American teenagers see depression and anxiety as major problems among their peers](#).

| COVID-19 is causing a spike in student questions about careers.

Volunteering as a crisis counselor at [The Crisis Text Line](#) is one way to help. Says one of its crisis counselors, Rainy Roth, in Troy, Mont.: “When young people open up to me, it brings me a comforting feeling. I think, in a way, it’s healing to the little girl in me who struggled with unknown fear and anxiety for so many years.”

Crisis Text Line’s counselors commit to volunteering four hours per week, up to 200 hours, typically over one year. To prepare for dealing with issues such as self-harm, suicide, depression, bullying and gender/sexual identity, volunteers undergo a 30-hour online training program.

Two-thirds of crisis situations for young people occur at night, so night owls and early risers may find a good fit here.

2. Help low-income high school students by offering math and college-planning advice online. You can do this through a service such as [UPchieve](#), a nonprofit startup that connects such students with live academic support through its free platform. As an “academic coach” at UPchieve, you can assist kids who need your help from your home or anywhere else with an internet connection.

UpChieve currently offers tutoring in math subjects from algebra through calculus. And its volunteers provide basic college-prep advice, such as finding affordable colleges, creating a plan for finishing applications and brainstorming ideas for personal statements.

There is no formal time commitment; you set your own volunteer schedule and update it as often as you’d like. If a student needs your help during a time you selected, UPchieve sends you a text notification.

3. Give career advice to young people online. COVID-19 is causing a spike in student questions about careers, according to Jared Chung, founder of [Careervillage.org](#), an online platform where students ask them of people with experience in particular fields.

“We’re seeing every one of our students affected, with schools shut down, training programs cancelled, and more,” Chung says. “They’re reeling from this [pandemic] and have no idea if they should still be studying for exams, no idea how this will affect their job readiness or job availability and no idea what to do if there’s a recession.”

Chung says his site needs more volunteers answering questions and assuring students they have not been abandoned. Currently, it has over 50,000 volunteers serving more than 4 million learners in 190 countries. If you’re interested in becoming one, create a profile on [CareerVillage.org](https://www.careervillage.org) and specify the types of questions you’d like to answer. When a relevant question is posted, you’ll be notified.

4. Search for virtual volunteer opportunities. Online portals like [VolunteerMatch](https://www.volunteermatch.org) and AARP’s [Create the Good](https://www.aarp.org/giving) have hundreds of volunteer roles to support youth from home.

To capture the biggest swath of options on VolunteerMatch, enter “United States” and then “Get Started” from the homepage. Then, select “Virtual” in the upper-left section of the following page.

On Create the Good, enter your ZIP code and then select “Show Only Home/Remote Opportunities” in the upper-left section of the page.

Both sites let you adjust filters by issue areas such as children and youth, education and literacy and more.

5. Use a video app to read with children in your life for 20 minutes a day. For instance, the video-calling app [Caribu](https://www.caribu.com) lets kids up to age 7 have engaging reading experiences with grandparents and trusted friends who can’t be in the room with them. It also offers games, activities and coloring sheets, in eight languages. The startup recently waived its \$6.99-per-month fee and made the app free during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What questions do you have about COVID-19?

A little information about you.

We’ll be in touch if we have questions about your comments.

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