

# 10 Ways to Respond to Fear and Scapegoating During the Coronavirus Epidemic

Use these ideas, based on Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework\*, with young people in your families, schools, and programs to respond in positive, relationship-enhancing ways to the interpersonal or prejudicial challenges that may surface during the coronavirus epidemic.

## Express Care: Show me that I matter to you.

1. Take time to listen intently to young people's concerns, questions, and ideas related to the pandemic. Don't dismiss their fears, but seek to understand their source.
2. If your school or program suspends in-person programming to reduce the risks of spreading the virus, be intentional about maintaining virtual caring connections with young people. For example, take time during virtual classroom sessions to check in and maintain relationships.

## Challenge Growth: Push me to keep getting better.

3. If you hear or see blatant or subtle bias or prejudice in conversations, in news coverage, or other places, challenge it. Talk about why blanket statements blaming a whole group of people for something is, by definition, a prejudice. What are healthy ways to respond?
4. Use this crisis as an opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills. When young people talk about or spread rumors, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, push them to dig for accurate information, scientific research, and credible sources to clarify the issues. If you're in a classroom or program setting, find ways to tie the epidemic into what you're learning.

## Provide Support: Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

5. When young people express interest in taking action to help those most affected by the coronavirus, ask them how you might be most helpful. Guide them to find ways they can respond that not only feel good to them, but are actually most useful to those who will receive the help.
6. If you know of people who are experiencing the brunt of prejudice or discrimination because of the coronavirus, find ways to stand in solidarity with them and invite others to do the same. As programs and schools temporarily move online, ensure that interactions remain supportive and negative interactions are dealt with in healthy ways.

## Share Power—Treat me with respect and give me a say.

7. Young people will likely have creative and innovative ways to respond to the risks of the coronavirus. For example, ask them how they want to be greeted while staying healthy (e.g., "heel bumps" or sign language). Even when major issues are involved, such as whether to suspend in-person programming, give them a voice to be heard, even if they don't make the final decision. *(Adults may feel a need to make all the decisions about how to respond to coronavirus because it's so serious. However, that doesn't mean you can't listen to young people, consider their ideas, and explain to them why you're making the choices you're making.)*
8. In many cases, young people have a lot to teach older generations about avoiding stereotypes and building relationships across differences. Invite young people to talk with groups of adults about how they have learned to form those connections and how they have enriched their lives.

## Expand Possibilities: **Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.**

9. Although most of our attention may be focused on hunkering down, the coronavirus epidemic can also open young people to new ideas, new people, new places, and even new possibilities for their own futures. While taking the appropriate actions, also find ways to use these events as teachable moments that can expand how young people think of themselves and their work.
10. One of the best ways to confront bias and prejudice is to build a broad network of relationships with people from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures. That's becoming harder to do in an increasingly polarized, fragmented society. Talk with young people about specific ways they already build connections across differences and other ways they would like to explore building bridges.

\* The research-based [Developmental Relationships Framework](https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/) identifies key actions young people need to experience in relationships in order to be resilient and thrive. A total of 20 actions are organized into the five elements listed on this page. For the full description of the framework and the research behind it, visit [www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/](https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/)