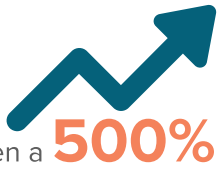


Research-Based Tips & Insights for Youth-Targeted Content Creation During a Public Health Crisis



There has been a **500%** increase in digital media consumption (6+ hour average) reported by parents of children as an effect of the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic, **65%** of youth reported wishing that TV content would talk about COVID-19. Recently, however, there has been a nearly **20%** drop in their interest to learn about COVID-19. Pandemic fatigue is afflicting children as well as adults.



Ten months into this pandemic, over **1,000,000 children** in the U.S. have been infected with COVID-19, comprising **11.5%** of total cases.



Minority youth are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, aligning with previous public health pandemic outcomes



46% Latinx and **30% Black** youth account for COVID-19 related hospitalizations among children 18 years and younger.



Asian American and Pacific Islanders have been met with greater discrimination and racism due to the pandemic, while also being disproportionately affected by the disease, accounting for nearly **50%** of all COVID-19 related deaths in many regions of the U.S.



American Indian and Alaska Native communities have been hard hit by COVID-19 with **12.9%** of infections coming from children younger than 18 years, compared to 4.3% of youth infections among Caucasians.

Many school districts across the U.S. are seeing a **staggering drop in K-12 enrollment** in fall 2020 due to COVID-19, with nearly

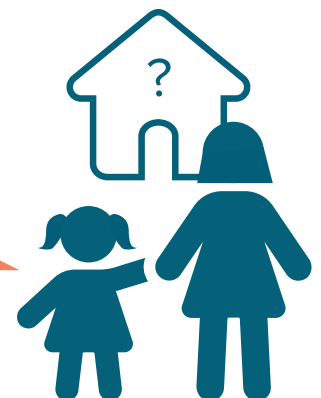


30% of adolescents neither working nor attending school.



My school just announced we will be closed for three weeks. My mom is a single mom and she won't get paid for the next three weeks. So many people in my family are struggling because of the types of jobs they have that they will be out of work for a while. We are not afraid of the virus itself; we're afraid we won't have a place to live soon.

-Personal account from a 12-year-old female



65%

of teens report **texting or using social media** more to keep in touch with family and friends during COVID-19.



But **61%** are worried that they're **falling behind in school,**



and **70%** have **little confidence that in-person schooling is safe.**





Ages 3-5 (Young Children)

Short-term effects • Emotion expression • Loneliness



Normalize young children washing their hands, correctly identifying symptoms of illness, and wearing a mask whenever inside or near others who are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Research Insight: It is important to acknowledge and address COVID-19 as children are aware and eager to learn about it. Preschool children are more concerned with the short-term effects of COVID-19 rather than long-term uncertainties.

Example: Help children visualize the virus so that it is concrete rather than abstract. Consider teaching appropriate health behaviors through song and games (i.e., singing while washing hands for 20 seconds). Depict fan-favorite characters routinely engaging in healthy behaviors to protect against COVID-19.



COVID-19 Lexicon for Kids:

COVID-19 is a new form of the Coronavirus, which is a group of viruses that make people sick. Wearing a mask helps stop germs from entering your body and making you sick. It also helps to prevent the spread of the germs and virus.



Portray young children expressing both positive and negative emotions to show that it is normal to have fluctuations in mood during periods of immense uncertainty, such as a global health pandemic.

Research Insight: Young children are still developing ways to express emotions and behaviors that are supported by language development. Helping children learn how to express their various emotions will allow them to better understand and cope with their feelings.

Example: If a character is crying, have them identify whether their tears are because they are sad, hurt, mad, or scared. If a character is laughing, have them say that they are feeling happy or joyful. Labeling emotions is key.



Utilize imaginary friends, dolls, and technology to show characters connecting with friends and family during periods of social isolation.

Research Insight: Loneliness has negative long-term effects on mental health from a young age. Welcoming imaginary friends, playing with dolls, or encouraging children to keep in touch with real friends and family through monitored video chats or writing letters may help protect against the adverse impact of loneliness.

Example: Show children on screen playing with imaginary friends during a lockdown when they're not able to play with other people or if parents are busy working at home.



COVID-19 Lexicon for Kids:

A **lockdown** is used to describe restrictions around social interactions, travel, and access to public spaces. Collins Dictionary named "lockdown" as its 2020 Word of the Year.

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Ages 6-9 (Children)

Health habits • Emotion regulation • Death



Portray children taking the initiative to engage in appropriate health behaviors such as wearing a mask, washing hands, and socially distancing from at-risk individuals.

Research Insight: Children begin to develop their own personal health habits and form a better understanding of how these habits affect future outcomes.

Example: Show children wearing masks and reminding friends and family around them to do the same. Alternatively, show the consequences if a child chooses to ignore these health guidelines (e.g., a grandparent risks getting sick and then a grandparent gets sick, etc.).



COVID-19 Lexicon for Kids:

Social distancing, or also called **physical distancing**, is putting space (at least 6 feet) between you and others to prevent the spread of germs and the virus.

Cognitive reappraisal

is an emotion regulation strategy that involves relabeling negative thoughts with neutral language: “She is ignoring me.” → “She is going through a hard time and will reach out to me when she is feeling better.”



Demonstrate strong child-adult relationships wherein children learn how to regulate their emotions from parents, caregivers, or role-models.

Research Insight: During the early years of elementary school, children begin to regulate their emotions better and learn to coordinate their emotions with others. The use of cognitive reappraisal strategies can be useful at this age.

Examples: Show children being vulnerable with adults about their emotions and demonstrate adults teaching children emotional regulation strategies to deal with negative emotions. Encourage activities that give youth a sense of control over their situation (i.e., writing thank you letters to health care workers).

Abstract terms such as “gone on”, “passed away”, “gone to sleep,” or “left us” have little meaning for children, so be explicit and use words like “death” and “dying” in context. Avoid religious phrases such as “God needed a new angel” or “Jesus needed Grandma in heaven with him” as children might blame “God” for taking someone away.



Acknowledge dying and death as children are developing a clear understanding of permanent loss around this age.

Research Insight: Children ages 6 to 8 are developing an understanding of death and are more willing to cope with feelings of grief. Be factual and concise about death but explain that it is not common or going to happen to the child to avoid harmful causation between sickness and death. Demonstrating empathy and patience when coping with death is important.

Example: Show diverse families having open and direct conversations to process death, grief, and children's intergenerational fears over older family members dying from COVID-19 (i.e. grandma and grandpa). Kids can memorialize and grieve in many different ways.

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Ages 10-12 (Tweens)

Empathy • Accurate knowledge • Social support



Portray characters at this age showing increased awareness of and concerns for other peoples' different experiences and feelings about the pandemic.

Research Insight: Early adolescents are regulating emotions with increasing independence while learning how to deal with their feelings without constant parent regulation. Prosocial behaviors and empathy begin to be shown in more pronounced ways during early adolescence.

Example: Characterize a range of diverse and inclusive family situations. Show a tween that recognizes and acknowledges that friends' parents may have increased risks because they still have to go into work, while one's own family is able to work from home.



Show tweens actively and accurately learning about how their actions can keep themselves and those around them safe during a public health crisis.

Research Insight: There is a heightened sense of awareness and knowledge about COVID-19 and its symptoms during early adolescence. However, there is variability in the accuracy of knowledge such that misinformation may still influence how tweens understand the implications of the pandemic.

Example: Tweens might be shocked to know that just because someone does not have any symptoms, it does not mean they cannot spread COVID-19 to those around them (asymptomatic spread). Familiarize tweens with the COVID-19 language and accurate facts.



COVID-19 Lexicon for Kids:

Someone who is **symptomatic** shows signs of being sick (e.g., coughing, sneezing, and having a hard time breathing). To be **asymptomatic** means to be sick, but to not show any symptoms. This is dangerous because it can still spread and make others sick too!



Employ a format that characterizes tweens sharing their experiences and being more emotionally vulnerable around their friends and family during a time of crisis like COVID-19.

Research Insight: Early adolescents begin to increase the value of peer and social groups for support as they seek independence from parents. This means that there is increasing value in peer-to-peer emotional support.

Example: Build storylines with all children having open conversations over text or video chat about how they may be feeling low because they cannot go or hang out like they used to and how they are handling the situation.



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Ages 13+ (Teens)

Caregiving • Virtual social engagement • Mental health



Depict teens holding more responsibilities, such as jobs or caregiving roles in families, which require extra precautions that need to be taken to keep them and others around them safe.

Research Insight: Many teens are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (e.g., holding a job, living in a multigenerational family household, caregiving, etc.) and may take more caution in their actions due to heightened risks.

Example: Teens and parents working as front-line or essential workers to support their family may have been affected by the job losses due to the pandemic. Show how shifts in these responsibilities have impacted teens and their families.



COVID-19 Lexicon for Kids:

Essential workers, or front-line workers, are defined as people who can't work from home and need to work during a crisis to help the world run. This includes individuals who make and serve food, grocery store workers, doctors, police officers, and many others.



Show teens adjusting to the “new normal,” such as routine video chat hangouts or exchanging social media content, with increased awareness of the impacts of the pandemic.

Research Insight: Given the increase in autonomy during this period of development, creating routine, and a sense of self-sufficiency and control by teenagers is critical in maintaining a sense of normalcy in turbulent times.

Example: Show teens hanging out and bonding over video chat or gaming together after school to mimic in-person socializing.



COVID-19 Lexicon for Kids:

What is a **pandemic?** This is when disease spreads quickly between many people around the world.



At an already heightened time for mental health risks, teens should be portrayed seeking out more emotional support from friends and teachers in virtual ways to get through the pandemic.

Research Insight: In the past 10 years, there has been a significant increase in depression and suicide among teens, and these trends may be exacerbated by the changes and uncertainties due to the pandemic. Destigmatizing mental health is especially important, and resources for support and treatment are critical during adolescence.

Example: Portray teens opening up to parents and teachers about how they're feeling about the lockdown and virtual schooling. Show that these adult figures can be trusted by teens through their optimism and dependability, while being compassionate and understanding toward how teens feel.



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