



Telehealth Activities for Youth

Updated with additional resources on April 16, 2020

Engaging youth in telehealth services can be difficult. These activities have been adapted to assist youth in better engagement through the screen. The activities are interactive and use creativity as a means of communication and engagement. The list is divided up into categories such as becoming comfortable on screen, general ideas, and ideas by topic (mindfulness, self-image, control, etc.)

Helping Kids/teens become more comfortable with being on screen (or to distract them) from being on screen

1. Create avatars - The teen can create an avatar that represents them or how they feel. They can “talk” through the avatar. To generate a free avatar:
<https://avachara.com/avatar/>
2. Do a puzzle together - Have them pick a puzzle and send you the link or vice versa. Work on the puzzle together. This may help to get them to feel more comfortable on the screen and open up. Free multiplayer puzzles are available on:
<https://jigsawpuzzles.io/>
3. Play a traditional board game online - Share your screen and choose a game like Connect Four. The child can direct you where to place their piece. For free multiplayer games like Connect Four and Chutes and Ladders check out:
<https://poki.com/en/g/connect-4>
4. Draw a picture together - Ask them to draw you a picture about how they are feeling, a specific topic, etc. You can also work on drawing a picture together or create a story. To draw online, check out: <https://aggie.io/>
5. Utilize a whiteboard on screen - Many video applications come with embedded whiteboards, but there are also free applications online. Use the whiteboard to draw or play games like Tic Tac Toe, Hangman, etc. It can also be used to illustrate certain key therapeutic points while keeping the child engaged. Microsoft offers a free whiteboard that does not require a Microsoft Suite subscription:
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/microsoft-whiteboard/9mspc6mp8fm4?activetab=pivot:overviewtab>
6. Charades Kids! - Charades Kids! is a free version of the popular [Heads Up](#) game created by Ellen DeGeneres. Free to download on a smartphone or ipad, kids can take turns humming songs, acting out animals, etc. To learn more:
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fatchicken007.headsupcharades2&hl=en_US

Other general ideas for engagement

1. Word Art - Have the child create a piece of “word art” using an online application like <https://wordart.com/>. Ask them why they picked a specific word, why they chose that shape, those colors, etc.
2. Feelings Mad Libs - The traditional humorous game can be turned into a therapeutic activity. The links below provide some examples, but you can also create your own or tailor the Mad Lib to specific topic.
 - <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/social-emotional-learning-mad-libs/>
 - <http://www.lianalowenstein.com/madLibsFeaturedTech.pdf>
 - Check out Pinterest for lots of examples
3. Flash card activities - Feelings, coping skills, skill building etc.
4. Guided meditations - Walk youth through scripted meditations at the end of sessions to assist in relaxation, stress reduction. If they are on a smartphone or have the ability, they can also go for a mindfulness walk and guide you through what they are seeing.
5. Worksheets - Share a worksheet on your screen and have them help you fill it out. Or use the whiteboard to complete the worksheet or draw pictures.

Activities adapted for being at home by topic (some may require basic supplies)

Mindfulness:

1. *Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt* - Find and Collect:

- 5 things they can see
- 4 things that make noise
- 3 things with texture
- 2 things they can smell
- 1 thing they can taste

Talk about what they found and what being mindful means. Further discuss being present and focus on the here and now.

2. *Let it go* (supplies: paper, pencil/crayons/markers)

Have youth draw balloons with strings on a piece of paper.

1. Write some things that are making you feel anxious or upset in the balloons
2. Close your eyes
3. Imagine that you are holding the balloons in your hand
4. Imagine that you let them go. Picture your worries floating away with the balloons.
Let it Go
5. Take a deep breath and open your eyes

Reflect: did the worries float away, if not discuss further.

Control:

1. **Activity to assist with anxiety and impulsivity** - (supplies: piece of paper, markers/crayons/colored pencils)

Ask youth to trace their hand on a piece of paper. Within the outline of their hand have them think about and write down all of the things they can control themselves. Things they have a “grasp” on. Outside the hand, have them think about the things they cannot control, things outside of their own control. Talk about what we have control over and what we do not. This exercise assists in youth understanding that we always have control of our own responses even when we don’t have control over a situation.

2. **Journaling** (supplies: notebook or paper, pencil/crayons/markers/colored pencils)

This is a very unique time in all our lives. Keeping a journal to write about our feelings, what’s happening, how life has changed can be a powerful tool to maintain control in a chaotic and uncertain time. Have youth participate in this and share any thoughts or feelings they wish to share from their writings or creative pages.

Self-esteem:

1. **Activity to demonstrate self-worth** - (supplies: piece of paper 8x11 or construction and markers/crayons/colored pencils)

Have the youth draw a side view of themselves from the neck up (example below). Kids can be as creative with the drawing as they wish. Above the outline have them write “I AM”.



Within the outline ask youth to write all the words that describe them. Ask them what words those that care about them might use to describe them. Have youth talk about the different characteristics. This activity allows youth to see positive traits about themselves and leads to discussions surrounding self- worth.

2. **Seeing yourself and how you think others see you (for older youth)** - (supplies- a shoe box or something similar, magazines, markers, paper, tape, various objects/trinkets)

Help youth understand that sometimes we see ourselves differently from or only allow certain characteristics to be seen by the outside world. On the outside of the box, youth use items to show how they believe others “see them”. They can use words, pictures, clippings from magazines, any items they want. On the inside of the box, they use items to show how they see themselves. Discussion includes differences, what youth may keep to themselves, addressing challenges around self-esteem and self-worth, things youth love about themselves and any things they may want to work on or be stronger at.