

# Does the COVID-19 pandemic impact parents' and adolescents' well-being?

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The COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures during the first lockdown in the Netherlands in March 2020 caused major changes in daily life. Parents worked from home and children followed school online. Therefore, the families were forced to spend more time together. This is particularly difficult for adolescents as they detach themselves more from the family during puberty and focus more on friends and hobbies. What is the effect of the pandemic and the associated lockdown on the well-being of parents and adolescents and parenting behavior in daily life?

## Diary app

A group of Leiden researchers from the Clinical Psychology section, led by Bernet Elzinga, set up a study at lightning speed to find out. Loes Janssen and Marie-Louise Kullberg, both Ph.D. students at the Clinical Psychology unit, approached Dutch families who had previously taken part in a similar study to participate. Family

members were asked, using a diary app, to keep track of how they felt and how their [family](#) interacted with each other for two weeks in early April. The participants had already used this diary app well before the [pandemic](#) as part of the RE-PAIR study.

## Individual differences in psychological well-being

As turned out, the 34 participating adolescents (11-18 years) and 67 [parents](#) seem to have coped well with the pandemic and associated lockdown. Findings from this Leiden diary study further show that [negative mood](#) increased only slightly in parents. The mood of the adolescents and parenting behavior (both from the perspective of the parents and of the children) did not appear to have changed. Families did differ considerably in the extent to which the pandemic had an impact on psychological well-being. Not all parents reported an increase in negative mood, some even indicated that they felt better or did not notice any difference during the lockdown. This also applied to the adolescents. The researchers tried to explain these differences by factors such as living conditions, income, having COVID-19 related symptoms or working with COVID-19 patients. However, none of these factors explained the differences in mood.

## Psychological advice must be tailor-made

Janssen and Kullberg emphasize the importance of these [individual differences](#). "The influence of the lockdown is therefore different for everyone; where one person, for example, suffered from boredom or loneliness, another liked the peace. Activities and strategies to deal with the situation also differed greatly from family to family, and between parents and children. While it helped parents to cook, it was important for the adolescents to listen to music." Advice to families is to stay as mentally as healthy as possible and to keep the home situation pleasant during the pandemic.

**More information:** Loes H. C. Janssen et al. Does the COVID-19 pandemic impact parents' and adolescents' well-being? An EMA-study on daily affect and parenting, *PLOS ONE* (2020). DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0240962](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240962)

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