

Helping Families Cope COVID-19

(novel coronavirus)

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an uncertain time for all. Things are rapidly changing and routines like school and work are disrupted. It's important for parents to take care of their own physical and emotional health in this difficult time.

Self-care for Parents



- Children can sense anxiety and stress. Talk with your child and share how you are both feeling. Take turns sharing what will make both of you feel calmer.
- Schedule time for yourself every day to do something relaxing. If you don't have a partner to take turns with, relax after the kids go to bed. The dishes can wait.
- Ask for support and stay connected with your friends, family and other parents. Use apps, group chats and social media.
- Take care of your body by taking deep breaths, stretching and/or meditating. Eat well, exercise and get plenty of sleep.
- Make a plan for when you are feeling overwhelmed. Bring out a special activity to keep your children engaged for a few minutes while you care for yourself.
- Give yourself grace. No one is going to do this perfectly. These are unusual times. Focus on creating stronger bonds and memories with your children.

Creating Calm



- Give your children a simple and child-friendly explanation of the situation. Remind them that children without underlying illnesses are not at high risk and help them learn about healthy social distancing.
- One way to help explain COVID-19 is: This virus is like a cold or flu, and everyone is working to prevent those who have weaker bodies from getting this virus.
- Children are going to display many emotions due to changes in their routine. Try to respond in a way that shows you understand their feelings and that their emotions are normal.
- School-aged children need routine. Make a schedule that allows time for school work, play and chores, and keep their sleep routine the same.
- Save yourself the stress and let your children have screen time. Children use screen time to connect with their friends and distract themselves from stress.
- Plan fun family activities, like games or a movie night. Include children in planning or cooking a meal together or creating new family traditions.
- Avoid letting children watch TV news. They may not understand it and may become frightened or worried. If your children do hear information on the TV or radio, interpret by using child-friendly language and help them understand their emotions are normal. Always keep your information simple and consistent.
- If your children bring up fear of death or dying, do not panic. Learn more about their worries and encourage their questions. Children's worries are often much simpler than parents realize. Keep your tone even, your emotions calm and be curious.

Activities



- Take nature walks where you and your children can still practice social distancing. Take a walk or hike, or go to an uncrowded beach. Avoid playdates or social activities.
- Check out the National Zoo webcams at <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/webcams>. The zoo may be closed, but the webcams are on!
- Take a virtual museum tour at <https://bit.ly/3a0cjVO>.
- Explore a fun fitness video on Fitness Blender at fitnessblender.com.
- Check to see if their favorite artist is having an online concert.