

## FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN SELF CARE GUIDE

Children of all ages are starting to feel the impact of COVID-19 within their daily routine. The disruption to their school schedule, cancellation of extra-curricular activities, limitations on contact with family and friends are just a few of the changes to their world during the outbreak of COVID-19 that could create changes within themselves. As parents, we have the ability to make the environment at home a safe space, which can alleviate some of the stress our children may be experiencing.

It's important to know that not all children respond to stress in the same way or on the same timeline. Some may show symptoms right away, some may not, and others, days or weeks down the road. Here are some symptoms to watch out for:

- \* Excessive worry or sadness
- \* Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- \* Regressing to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- \* Increase irritability or "acting out" in teens
- \* Unexplained body aches

Ways to support your child through COVID-19:

- \* Make time to talk to your children about COVID-19 with age appropriate information. Let them ask questions and share their concerns with you in a nonjudgmental environment. There are many resources out there for parents that have age appropriate information.
- \* Model appropriate behaviors like eating well, taking breaks, good sleeping habits, and connecting with loved ones.
- \* Model confident and calm behavior when dealing with an emergency. This will make the children feel safe and will also mirror the same behavior back.
- \* Keep a regular routine, regardless if schools are closed. Involve the children in making their daily schedule. By doing this, it will allow the children to feel a sense of control and normalcy.

Just as your child is adjusting to this new norm, as parents, you are also learning to balance your child's online schooling, working from home, and home life. During this transition you may experience higher than normal stress which is a normal feeling right now in these unpredictable times. It is even more essential now, that you remember to take care of your own well-being just as you would your child's.

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### Here are some ways to support yourself at home through COVID-19:

- Create time and space for yourself to decompress from the day's activities. Indulge in an activity that brings you peace even if it's for 10 minutes. This could be like an uninterrupted shower with your favorite music playing, taking a walk around the block by yourself, reading a book or watching a new episode of a series once your child has gone to bed.
- Keep a routine to help you balance your work schedule (if working from home) an time to assist your child in completing their school assignments. Your typical daily routine may look different than your typical 8 to 5 day. You may find that your mornings are dedicated to helping your child with their schoolwork and you need to work in the afternoons. You decide what schedule works best for your family. There's no right way to do this. Just remember, to be kind and compassionate to yourself as your family adapts to this transition.
- Setting healthy daily practices like eating nutritious meals, getting enough restful sleep, and incorporating physical movement into your day is a way to take care of your wellbeing. Healthy practices will keep your immune system strong and your mental health balanced. The goal is not to go on a diet but to continue making healthy choices and being intentional with them.
- Limiting your news intake and increasing activities that you enjoy may also help in improving your overall mood. From televised news reports to social media posts regarding COVID-19 it can all be very overwhelming. Set aside a time of the day to check on any updates from credible sources like the Center for Disease Control website or your local county social media accounts. This will limit unneeded exposure to other less credible information. Take time to engage in meaningful activities that bring you joy like picking up old hobbies or looking into new ones. This can be done on your own or as a family. Try looking up new recipes and making it together as a family. Be creative!

**Below are some helpful links that can alleviate some stress for both children and parents:**

<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

The Child Mind Institute has a variety of resources to help parents and children through this epidemic. The site includes expert live chats with clinicians, daily tips for parenting during COVID-19, managing anxiety, and a variety of other resources.

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>

Emergencies that disrupt children's daily activity, like COVID-19, can have an impact on their emotional response. As a parent, it is important to look out for some of those typical responses to stressful events. Visit the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website to identify some of these responses according to your child's age range and what you as a parent can do to ease some of these symptoms.

<https://www.facebook.com/OnTheRoadCBS/>

Join Norah O'Donnell live everyday at 2:00 p.m. through Facebook Live as he demonstrates acts of kindness in his Kindness 101 class. This is a great opportunity for children of all ages to tap into their happy and warm feelings during a time of instability.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

Parents, it can be difficult finding the right words to explain what the coronavirus is to our children without increasing their stress levels. The National Public Radio (NPR) has made it easier on us by creating this printable comic and an engaging audio story to go with it.

<https://www.covadesignstudio.com/coloringpages>

Coloring can be a positive coping skill during stressful times for all ages. Coloring may reduce anxiety symptoms allowing the child to feel more relaxed.

<https://jentaylorplaytherapy.com/is-coloring-therapeutic/>

This link provides the benefits of coloring for children, adolescents, and adults.

<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>

Incorporating mindfulness into your family's routine may be beneficial in lowering anxiety levels, combating feelings of stress, and increasing feelings of being calm. This link provides what mindfulness is, what activities you can do, and resources to tap into.

**If you or someone you know is in crisis or talks about hurting themselves, Please contact 911. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, please contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255, available 24/7 365 in over 100 languages.**

Here is an alternate hotline that provides crisis counseling for natural and manmade disasters:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 available 24/7 365 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

#### **To reach Catholic Charities of Central Florida Behavioral Health Services**

In English:

Program Director: Catherine Galda Email: [cgalda@cfcc.org](mailto:cgalda@cfcc.org)

Contact Care Coordinator Kyle Osborn for services

Cell: 407-969-8534 Email: [kosborn@cfcc.org](mailto:kosborn@cfcc.org)

En Español:

Directora de Programa Catherine Galda Email: [cgalda@cfcc.org](mailto:cgalda@cfcc.org)

Contacte a la Consejera de Salud Mental Rosa para servicios