

Tips for Parents:

Supporting Your Kids and Yourself During the COVID-19 Crisis

This pandemic puts an extraordinary amount of pressure on parents to cope with our own reactions, keep households running, and manage childcare while school is cancelled. On top of that, many of us are worried about how the pandemic is affecting our kids' behavioral health.

While there are many helpful recommendations on how to talk to your children about COVID-19 and help them manage anxiety in this time, it's just as important that you model healthy coping mechanisms yourself. It's OK to show your kids you're worried, but then show them how to manage those feelings in a healthy way, so they will be able to as well.

For Parents

- **First and foremost: be kind to yourself.** This is uncharted territory for most of us, and no one expects any of us to know how to do this yet. We're going to mess up, we're going to feel stressed, and we're all doing the best we can.
- **Remember coping strategies that have worked for you in the past:** distraction, deep breaths, exercise, meditation, hobbies, positive self-talk, playlists, etc.
- **Set small, achievable goals.** It can be overwhelming to think of trying to maintain these routines for weeks or longer. Instead just focus on your plan for today. "One day at a time" remains timeless wisdom.
- **Remind yourself you have good parenting skills.** You have been caring for your children for years. You will get through this! Don't hesitate to reach out to your support network to ask for advice, vent, or to take a break. And if you need more support, reach out to [a local support line](#).

For Kids

- **Get your kids to move for 5 minutes every half hour.** People, especially children, need to move their bodies to stay healthy and balanced. Even on rainy days there are great options for kids like GoNoodle or Cosmic Kids Yoga. Or if you want to avoid screen time, try jumping jacks, stretching, or push-ups.
- **Offer choices whenever possible.** Using straightforward boundaries can help your child feel a sense of control. For example, "Do you want screen time before lunch or after lunch today?"
- **Provide structure and routine.** Set aside a place in the house for tutoring. Write a loose schedule. Try getting up and going to bed at the same time. Knowing the plan for the day will reduce everyone's anxiety.
- **Let your children know they are contributing to the solution by staying home.** It's important for kids to understand that what they are doing matters.

Maintaining social connections is essential for both you and your kids. Find ways to stay connected to friends and loved ones. Phone, video conference (Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc), email, and even paper mail are all good options.