

Tips for Supporting Yourself During the Pandemic

As concern increases over the spread of the coronavirus, you might be feeling vulnerable, concerned, or anxious about the spread of the virus and how it affects your family. Your child might also be feeling this way in response to changes in your mood, information they are hearing, or changes in their daily routine or environment. The following suggestions and resources are to help you take care of yourself so you can support your child.



#1: Notice Your Feelings

It is important to take note of your feelings at this time. You might be experiencing many different emotions at this time (e.g., scared, anxious, frustrated), and that is ok. However, children are sensitive to adult cues. Awareness of your own emotions will help you to know what to do to calm yourself, so that you can support your child. Be kind to yourself; let go of responsibilities and timelines that are not critical.



#2: Calm Yourself

Find activities that help with the stress and anxiety you might be experiencing.

- ▶ Listen to a meditation app or music.
- ▶ Cook.
- ▶ Clean.
- ▶ Get moving either outside or through an internet or tv exercise class.
- ▶ Stick to your routine as best you can.



#3: Limit Media Exposure

It is important to be aware of your community's response to the coronavirus, symptoms of the virus, and basic hygiene practices but do so in small doses. Constant exposure to information can cause feelings of anxiety.

- ▶ Turn off notifications on your phone.
- ▶ Read articles or watch media clips that present only the facts you need to know.
- ▶ Choose 10 minutes a day where you can get the information you need, and then turn it off.
- ▶ Limit social media.



#4: Connect

Find someone you can talk to about how you are feeling. This could be a trusted family member, friend, or therapist. Be mindful of what you say in front of your children, as this can increase their fear and anxiety.



#5: Be Mindful

Children follow our cues and are sensitive to our responses. It might cause them to worry.

- ▶ Be aware of your feelings and how you talk about them in front of your child.
- ▶ Avoid reacting to news or information you hear in front of your child.
- ▶ Limit media reports on your phone or TV in your child's presence.



#6: Set Reasonable Expectations

Your routines might look completely different. You might be working from home, and the kids might be home from school or childcare, and balancing roles as a partner, parent, and employee might feel like a challenge. Setting reasonable expectations for you and your family will help you feel less stressed and more focused.

- ▶ Stick to your regular routine as much as possible.
 - Small bits of your regular schedule will help ease any big emotions you might be feeling.
- ▶ Breathe and shift your thinking away from things you can't change.
 - This will help you to focus on creating solutions to any challenges you might be experiencing.
- ▶ Make a daily schedule for you and your family, including hours you need to work, family time, and a limited number of chores.
 - This will help you set reasonable expectations for the day and allow you to feel successful.
 - If you have a partner who is working at home as well, work together to communicate when you have work calls or deadlines, and divide childcare/home chores.
- ▶ Teach your children age-appropriate ways to assist with taking care of your home and family (e.g., sorting laundry, feeding pets, cleaning up toys, bringing dishes to the sink).
 - This might need to be supervised at first, but as your children gain independence in these tasks, it will help you and your family feel more productive.
- ▶ Create a separate workspace that is clutter-free.
 - Use visual cues. Ask your child to assist you in making a “stop and go” sign to hang in your home workspace. Teach your child that “stop” means you are working and a “go” sign means that they can talk with you.
 - Designate a way for your child to get your help if you are working or designate the “helper adult” if all family members are working from home.
- ▶ Communicate to your child when you will be working and when they can have your attention.
 - Consider using a visual schedule or timer while providing engaging activities for your children to do independently while you work.
 - Offer highly motivating activities for your child that you only offer when you need to work.

For more resources to support families and young children in coping with stressful emergency or disaster situations, visit:

ChallengingBehavior.org/Emergency