

Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19

Tips for Parents and Children

The coronavirus (COVID-19) and new social distancing rules have created a new normal for families.

This new normal can be stressful and even frightening for parents and children. During this time, parents and children can reduce stress by taking care of yourself, your family and your community by being supportive and making connections.

WAYS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND TEENS

- [Talk with your child](#) about the COVID-19 outbreak and social distancing.
- Answer questions and [share facts about COVID-19](#) in a way that your child understands.
- Validate your child's feelings. Let them know they are safe, but it is ok to feel upset.
- Talk to them about how you cope with your stress. Learning how you cope will help them cope.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret or become frightened when they do not fully understand something they see or hear.
- Try to keep up with regular routines, but don't put too much pressure on yourself or your child during this time.
- Understand that children and teens (and many adults) display anxiety in different ways. (See the figure below.)
- Sign up and take a free online session about how gratitude helps children in a crisis [SparksandStitchinstitute](#) (Session is April 15th at noon but will be recorded.)

8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



4. Chandeliering

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

FOCUS

6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

*“Most young kids will remember **how their family home felt** during the coronavirus panic more than anything specific about the virus. Our kids are watching us and learning about how to respond to stress and uncertainty. **Let’s wire our kids for resilience, not panic.**” ~Unknown*

WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED

Connect with family:

- Call/Google Meet/Skype/FaceTime/Zoom.
- Look at photo albums and discuss family heritage.
- Create a family tree.
- Write letters or create cards for relatives.

Connect with friends and neighbors:

- Go outside, talk to your neighbors from a safe distance.
- Host a virtual meal.
- Attend a virtual concert, church service, or exercise or take a virtual yoga class.
- Play an online game together.
- Choose an activity from [RandomActsofKindness](#).

Connect with culture:

- Read books about your culture.
- Cook a meal together that reflects your cultural heritage.
- Virtually visit more than 1,200 museums around the world via [Google Arts & Culture](#)

Connect with yourself:

- Take breaks from the news and social media.
- Meditate, stretch or do yoga.
- Eat healthily.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Journal or read.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Exercise.
- Take deep breaths.
- Take a bath.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

If you or someone you know are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression or anxiety or feel like you might harm yourself or others:

- Call 911
- Call your health provider
- Text Calm4Calm
- Text TALK to 552020 or HABLAR for Spanish Speakers
- Call the Disaster Distress Hotline at 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233