



COVID-19 PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS GUIDE:

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Version 3, 4/27/20

Are you struggling to keep your family safe and sane during the COVID-19 outbreak? You are not alone! Fear of the spread of the illness takes a toll, not to mention financial stresses, added child rearing and schooling responsibilities while respecting physical distancing, and endless demands to juggle multiple tasks for you and your family. Amid the widespread uncertainty, fear of infection, and loss of daily routine, the stress of the pandemic has an impact on families' mental health. To help families maintain their well-being, here are some tips for families with children. Helpful resources also are included.

Maintain a Calm, Reassuring, and Loving Approach

- Ensure you show your children little acts of love and kindness everyday
- Provide them extra comfort and support
- Acknowledge your children's worries and fears
- Be sensitive and respond to your children's behavior, reactions, moods and any changes that occur
- Check in frequently about how your children are feeling and coping, and provide reassurance as appropriate
- Monitor your children's reactions, and remember they will vary based on their age and circumstances [[guide](#), National Child Traumatic Stress Network]
- Be as patient with your children as possible and apologize when you lose your patience
- Be mindful of your own responses to COVID-19, and how these may affect your children, and try to calm yourself to the extent possible so you can calm your children
- Prioritize helping your children stay on track socially, emotionally, and academically by managing your own stress



Engage in Best Practices to Keep Your Children Healthy

- Let your children know you will do your best to keep them and everyone in the family (including yourself) safe and healthy
- Know the latest on keeping people safe and healthy
- Model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices
- Teach children simple actions that will reduce the spread of germs and decrease the likelihood they will get the virus – handwash frequently, cough or sneeze into tissue or elbow, avoid people who are sick, and keep the 6-foot distance as much as possible. [[COVID-19 and Children](#), CDC]
- Self-monitor all family members daily as recommended
- Talk about what your family can do to stay healthy
- Find fun ways for your children to stay healthy
 - Use different handwashing songs
- Praise your children when you see them use good health practices
- Let your children know what the community is doing to keep people safe and healthy

Talk to Your Children about COVID-19 [[Talking with Children](#), CDC]

- Remember, it's good and important to talk
- Make yourself available for conversation routinely, and be honest and accurate in what you say in these conversations
- Check in daily to see what questions your children have and address those
- Use neutral or open-ended questions to understand what your children know
- Encourage questions and let your children's questions guide the conversation
- Provide relevant and truthful information, but remember your children's age and level of understanding
- Correct misperceptions and misinformation in an age-appropriate way
- Avoid language that is blaming or stigmatizing



- Provide updates as you learn them about them (e.g., new safety orders, return to school/childcare, etc.)

Be Attuned to Screen and Social Media Time

- Monitor and limit children's exposure to media about the virus
- Be aware of what they are exposed to and its impact on them when you are accessing information
- Pay attention to what children see and hear and discuss media reports with them in an age-appropriate way
- Encourage children to use their screen time to focus on topics other than COVID-19
- Encourage and engage your children in activities rather than screen and social media time whenever possible

Develop New Routines

- Create a routine and structure for the day (e.g., wake up, schoolwork, exercise, meals, free play, screen time, bedtime)
 - Stay connected to school
 - Include family time each day
 - Prioritize child-directed play [[Special Play Time](#), CDC] [parent-generated ideas for play [here](#)]
 - Ensure break time for everyone, including the caregivers [[Parent Self-Care](#), Psychology Today]
 - Set work boundaries to facilitate your participation in the family routine (see tips [here](#))
- Get everyone's input on the routine
- Strive to have all caregivers on the same page
- Recognize that the routine needs to be flexible
- Write the routine for all to see [[Sample Schedules](#), Huffington Post]

Care for Family When a Family Member Gets Sick with COVID-19

- Make a crisis plan for this before someone gets sick
- Be sure your children know the importance of letting you know if they have symptoms so they can be monitored and/or evaluated
- Convey to your children why you need to self-isolate if you are symptomatic and ensure they have adequate caregiving in place



- Find ways to communicate with your children if you are isolated (at home, with someone who can care for you, at the hospital)
- Post potential caregiver responsibilities prominently so an emergency responder can find it and contact these individuals to care for your children
- Be honest with your children in an age-appropriate way, which may include conversations about death

Helpful Resources

- The National Association of School Psychologists provides further recommendations ([Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19](#), NASP)
- Parenting for Lifelong Health, UNICEF, CDC, WHO, Global Partnership to End Violence, and the Internet of Good Things have a series of evidence-based tips to help parents keep themselves and their children safe, happy, and healthy during this stressful period ([COVID-19 24/7 Parenting Resources](#), PLH)
- The International OCD Foundation provides these and more recommendations for talking to children about COVID-19, including children with OCD or related anxiety disorders. [[Talking to kids about COVID-19](#), IOCDF]
- ADAA provides tips for parents communicating with an anxious child or teen about COVID-19. Children may be concerned, frightened, or confused. Parents can help them by answering their questions calmly and in a way that's focused on the facts, while also letting them know that it's okay to feel the way they do. [[How to Talk to Your Anxious Child or Teen About Coronavirus](#), ADAA, Richa Bhatia, MD]
- Livescience offers a kid's guide to understanding the coronavirus. The guide contains school age-appropriate language, pictures to capture your child's attention, and answers to commonly asked questions: <https://www.livescience.com/coronavirus-kids-guide.html>
- NPR reported on a kid's comic exploring the virus and explaining safety recommendations. [[Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](#), NPR]
- CDC tips for helping children cope with emergencies and developmental norms for children's reactions to an emergency. [[Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#), CDC]
- Free online educational resources to engage kids with at home:
 - [Kinedu](#), an app with activities tailored to your baby's developmental stage, is offering free subscriptions until April 15



- [Project Gutenberg](#), a free online library of classic books
- [The American Chemistry Society](#) is offering a chemistry curriculum for kids of various ages, including free chemistry activities, animations, projects, simulations, webinars, and videos
- [NASA](#) has printable STEM workbooks
- [Scholastic](#) is offering a free 20-day learning program for children PreK through Grade 9
- [InCharge.org](#) is offering free personal finance lesson plans for multiple grade levels
- [The American Federation of Teachers](#) has a wealth of resources to help with learning at home
- Additional resources can be found at: [Georgia Public Libraries](#), [Outschool.com](#), [ProdigyGame.com](#), [Outside Classroom Day](#), and [KhanAcademy.org](#)
- Local resources for food insecure families can be found at [11ALIVE](#), [Georgia Food Bank Association](#), or by texting “FindFood” or “Comida” to 888-976-2232
- If you need assistance finding food, paying housing bills, or other essential services, contact the United Way by going to [211.org](#) or dial 211 to speak to someone who can help.
- Coping with the outbreak of COVID-19 can be highly stressful [[Keeping Your Distance to Stay Safe](#)]. If you are feeling overwhelmed by emotion or thinking of harming yourself or others, you may wish to call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)
- The National Child and Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has created helpful tipsheets to support children’s coping and resilience:
 - [Coping in Hard Times: Fact Sheet for Parents](#)
 - [Coping in Hard Times: Fact Sheet for Youth High School and College Age](#)
 - [Coping in Hard Times: Fact Sheet for School Staff](#)
- Children’s Books:
 - [My Hero is You](#)
 - [Stinkerpants & Stuart Ask: What Happens When the Coronavirus Changes](#)



[Everything? by Sara Olsher](#)

- My epidemic story: A guided workbook for United States children, families, teachers, and caregivers by Gilbert Kliman, MD, Edward Oklan, MD, Harriet Wolfe, MD - <http://nobpc.org/word2015/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Kliman-Epidemic-Story-workbook.pdf>
- [Right now, I am fine.](#) By Daniela Owen, PhD
- [Corona virus: A book for Children](#) by Kate Wilson, Elizabeth Jenner, Nia Roberts, and Axel Scheffler
- [What to do at home during times of quarantine: A guidebook for adults by children](#)