

Helping Children and Families Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic



A guide to help children cope with the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COPE WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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We dedicate this book to all the front line medical workers and first responders, who put their lives on the line everyday to help others, and their families who support them. Thank you for all you do!

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Dear Parent or Caring Adult,

The world is currently facing a pandemic brought about by a newly discovered virus known as COVID-19 or the novel coronavirus. Pandemics happen naturally. They have been a part of human history throughout time. You may have heard about the Black Death that ravaged Asia and Europe in the 14th Century, the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, or most recently, the 2009 H1N1 (Swine Flu) pandemic, which originated in North America.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about sudden and unprecedented changes to the lives of billions of people around the world. Unlike other natural disasters, such as hurricanes, wildfires or floods, which affect limited geographic areas over a generally predictable amount of time, pandemics can have worldwide reach and may not have a finite end. Pandemics can last for months or even years, and may occur in waves over time in the same area.

The COVID-19 pandemic can be a stressful time for children and adults. Just as it is important to attend to a child's physical health during this period, it also is important to attend to their mental health needs.

To assist, we created *Helping Children and Families Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic*. This guide contains activities that parents and other caring adults can do together with children. The activities are appropriate for most children ages 6 to 12 years, but may be used with older or younger children as well. We encourage you to adjust the activities and their pace to your child. Younger children (ages 6 to 8) may need extra help from an adult, and may prefer to complete some activities by drawing rather than by writing. Younger or active children may also prefer working on one topic at a time; others may be able to complete two or more topics in one sitting.

There are 16 Topics covered in this book, divided into five sections. For most topics there is an "Adult Page" on the left and a "Child Page" on the right. Some Adult Pages have "Joint Activities" at the bottom for adults and children to complete together. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to cover every topic or complete every activity. Everyone reacts differently to a situation, and some children prefer to seek out more information than others. Although this book has been written in a suggested sequence, it is okay to skip ahead if you feel a section may be particularly helpful for your child.

Each Adult Page has instructions and activities for adults -



Each Child Page contains parallel information and activities for children -



Section I provides tips for discussing the pandemic with children and for adult self-care. Section II will help you "ease into" using the book and understand your child's thoughts and feelings about the pandemic. Section III covers coping skills that will be helpful for most children. Section IV contains information to help children with difficult situations or feelings. Section V contains additional important information and helpful strategies.

We hope that this material will provide some support for you, your family, and the children you are working with.

With our best wishes,

Annette La Greca Scott Sevin

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Talking With Children About COVID-19

It is important for parents and other caregivers to occasionally check in with their children and see how they are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also will be important to keep children informed of significant events. This means having a number of discussions with your child over the course of the next few weeks and months as the pandemic evolves.

Many adults have expressed concerns over how best to approach conversations with children about the pandemic. While the topics may change over time, and some conversations may be easier to discuss than others, all parents and caregivers can benefit from the following tips:

- Check your own stress level before talking with your child. If you are not okay, wait until you have your own emotions and feelings under control before starting a discussion. Children take cues from adults. If you are overly worried or fearful, your child will pick up on these emotions and become more stressed.
- Remain calm, comforting, reassuring and supportive. What you say and how you say it can help to reduce your child's worries.
- Rehearse or practice having a difficult conversation ahead of time with another adult. This way, you can be better prepared when you have that conversation with your child.
- Have notes handy. Notes can help to guide your conversation.
- Don't be surprised if your child's concerns are different from your own. Be open to hearing what your child has to say. For example, early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, many adults were focused on safety, while many children were concerned about how their lives were disrupted (e.g., not able to see friends or play outside).

ADULT ACTIVITY: Have a "Talking" Plan

It can be useful to write out a plan about how and when you will talk with your child, and what information or events you will share. This will increase the chances that your conversations will go well. A few tips to consider include:

Identify a "talking" location. Identify a place you and your child can regularly go to for your conversations. Choose a quiet location away from distractions and other people.

Try to have a regular time to talk. This can help children feel more secure and comfortable in discussing their thoughts and feelings. Look for times when your child may be relaxed and ready to share their day, such as before dinner. Avoid talking with a child right before bedtime, as this can worsen fears and worries.

Ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions (How? What? Why?) will help you gain a better understanding of how your child is feeling and what he or she is thinking about. Ask questions like: "*How has your day been?*" or "*What's on your mind today?*"



Tips For Adult Self Care

Taking care of your own emotional and health needs is an important part of caring for your family and friends. After all, if you are not doing okay, you can't be there to help others, including your child. For example, in an airplane emergency, parents are instructed to put their oxygen masks on first before placing one on their child. This is to ensure that parents will be strong and able to help their child as needed. The same idea applies to the COVID-19 pandemic. The better you care for yourself, the better you will be able to provide for your child and family.

There are many ideas for adult self care. In fact, many of the activities in this book also apply to adults. These principles include:

1. Establishing a regular routine.
2. Limiting exposure to news and social media coverage of the pandemic.
3. Staying healthy by eating nutritious foods and sleeping well.
4. Engaging in regular exercise (which also helps to reduce anxiety and feeling "down.").
5. Keeping a positive outlook (remind yourself that we are strong, need to be patient, and will eventually get over this crisis.).
6. Staying connected with loved ones and friends who care about you and support you.
7. Practicing relaxation and/or mindfulness.

Some additional ideas include:

8. Have a "me time" in your daily schedule. That is – take a break from work and others at home to do something you enjoy or find relaxing (such as reading a book, taking a bath, calling a friend, working on a hobby, playing a game, etc.).
9. Say "no" to additional family or work obligations, if you can.
10. Practice yoga or other calming exercises.
11. Contact a mental health professional if you feel overly stressed, upset or worried.

The pandemic is very stressful. It is easy to get irritated, especially with family members who may be at home all the time. It's okay to allow to yourself to take a break and have time for yourself. Everyone needs their own space – including parents! So, take a break for yourself, so you are able to take care of others.

Some Resources for Self Care:

Psych Central

What Self Care Is - and What It Isn't, by Raphailia Michael, MA
<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>

Psychology Today

25 Simple Self Care Tools for Parents, by Erin Leyba, LCSW, Ph.D.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/joyful-parenting/201708/25-simple-self-care-tools-parents>



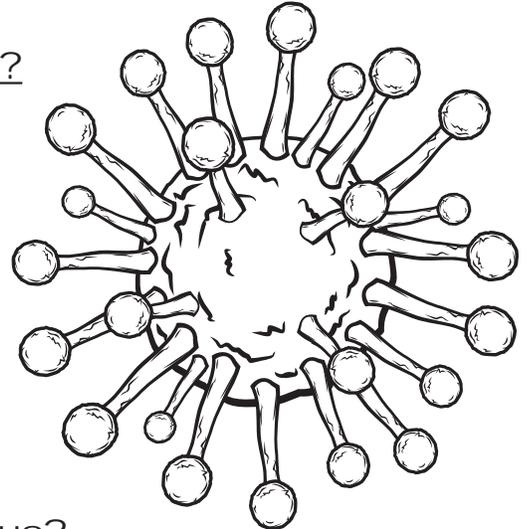
Understanding The Pandemic: What is COVID-19?

While many parents and other caring adults want to support their children’s mental health during the pandemic, it can be difficult to know where to begin. As a starting point, it will help to provide your child with some background information on COVID-19 and events surrounding the pandemic. Children understand events based on their own experiences, which are more limited than adults’ experiences. It will be important to give children some context about the COVID-19 pandemic in order to help them cope with their feelings.

This section will help your child understand COVID-19 and events surrounding the pandemic. It will also help to clear up any confusion your child may have about the virus or what has happened to them, their family or their community during the pandemic.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a commonly used name for the disease that is caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus. The “CO” stands for corona; “VI” for virus; “D” for disease, and “19” for 2019, the year it was discovered. You may also hear the virus referred to as the “novel coronavirus.” The word “novel” means “new” – meaning that this is a new type of coronavirus that hasn’t been seen before. This is important because since it is a new disease, no one will have built up an immunity to it or have a vaccine to prevent it.



What is a Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are common in nature and affect both humans and animals. They are named after large spikes on their surface that resemble a crown that a king or queen might wear. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are seven known types of coronaviruses that affect humans. Some coronaviruses are responsible for the common cold. Others can cause more serious diseases, like COVID-19.

JOINT ACTIVITY: COVID-19 VOCABULARY

The pandemic has brought about many new words and phrases that may not be familiar. It will help if your child understands terms that may be prominent in the media. Below are some keywords to discuss with your child. Some children may not want to discuss every word. You can read these words aloud and have your child choose which ones to talk or learn more about. You can also ask your child what other words or phrases they would like to know more about. If necessary, consult a trusted source for more information.

COVID-19	Coronavirus	SARS-CoV-2
Pandemic	Epidemic	Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Ventilator	Face mask	World Health Organization (WHO)
Swab test	Social distancing	Quarantine
Antibody	Shelter in place	Immunity
Flattening the curve	Essential activities	Contact tracing



What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new virus that has been getting people sick around the world. A virus is a tiny germ that you can't see unless you have a microscope. When a virus gets inside a person, it can make that person very sick. There are many different kinds of viruses. COVID-19 is a kind of virus known as a coronavirus. It is called a coronavirus because it has spikes that stick out from its body. The spikes make the virus look like a crown that a king or queen might wear. Below, draw a picture of what you think a coronavirus looks like.



Understanding The Pandemic: Your Pandemic Story

Pandemics are a type of natural disaster. Similar to other natural disasters, like hurricanes, floods, wildfires and earthquakes, pandemics mark a defining moment in the lives of those affected. Memories of the disaster often stay with people for the rest of their lives. For children, however, the significance of such an event may not be immediately understood or their memories of the event may fade with time. It will be helpful for them to remember events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and their own personal experiences.

The activities in this section will help you and your child reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also help to clear up any misunderstandings your child may have. When your child is finished working on the activities on Pages 8 and 10, go over their answers with them. If your child has any incorrect information, help correct those misunderstandings.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Create A COVID-19 Timeline

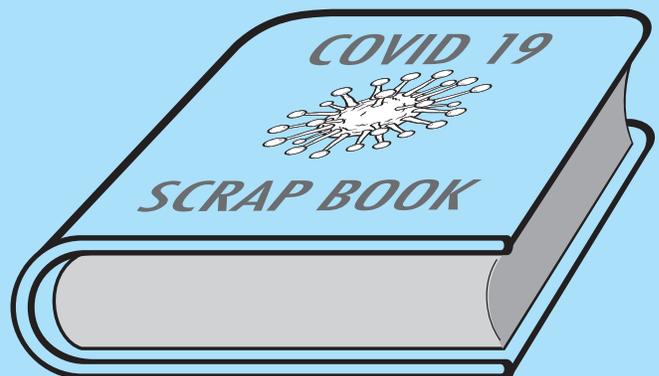
Together with your child, create a timeline of major events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Start with when and where the pandemic first began. Then, track the pandemic's spread around the world. Be sure to include events that occur in your local area related to the pandemic as well (such as when shelter in place orders are given, schools close, etc.). Continue tracking events and add to your timeline as the pandemic unfolds. Include events that happen when the pandemic starts to wind down and as life get back to normal (such as when businesses and schools reopen, when your child first sees their friends in-person again, when you first go back to the movies, etc.). When you are finished, you can place the timeline in a scrapbook.

Example:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Highlight</u>
December 31, 2019	First reported cases of a new disease emerge out of Wuhan, China
January 30, 2020	The WHO declares a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Your COVID-19 Story

You and your child are living through a significant time in human history. One day, future generations will read about the COVID-19 pandemic in their history books. As people who are living through history, you and your child have a special story to tell about your experiences. Together, create your own "COVID-19 story." You can draw pictures or write about your pandemic experiences. Begin your story before the pandemic started and describe what has happened to you and your family since. Add to your story over the next few weeks and months as the pandemic progresses. If you want, you can place your story in a scrapbook along with newspaper articles, pictures, and other mementos.





Where Did COVID-19 Come From?

The World Health Organization (also known as WHO) is an international organization that is part of the United Nations. The WHO protects people all over the world by promoting good health and keeping the world safe from diseases. The organization works hard every day to protect you and your family and friends. When a health emergency happens, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO is responsible for gathering and sharing information about the disease. They have a team of scientists that conduct research on the virus causing the disease. The WHO also works with many other scientists around the world to try to find out how the disease affects people, how to stop it from spreading, and how to cure it.

Assignment: COVID-19 Virus Hunter

One of the ways scientists learn about a new virus is they try to find where the virus first came from. If scientists are able to find where the virus first started, they will learn a lot about the virus and possibly how to stop it. The scientists that try and find where a disease first started are called virus hunters!

Pretend you are a virus hunter working for the World Health Organization. Your mission is to do some research and find out where COVID-19 first started. Be careful - a lot of information on the Internet about where the virus first started is not correct. You will need to dig deep into your detective skills to find out what's truthful and what's not, just like scientists in real life! Remember to only use trusted sources for your information, like the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control. So, put on your detective hat and let's crack the case! Your mission is to answer the following questions:

In what country did the COVID-19 virus first start? _____

In what city did the COVID-19 virus first start? _____

What part of the city was COVID-19 first reported? _____

In what month and year did the first people get sick? _____

On a separate sheet of paper, draw yourself as a virus hunter tracking down COVID-19.



Understanding How Your Child Feels

Pandemics, like other disasters, affect people in different ways. Life history, personality and a person's experiences during and after the event all help to shape a person's response. Because some people will be more affected than others, reactions to a pandemic may differ greatly from one person to the next.

For many children and adults, an upsetting event such as a pandemic can bring about strong feelings and mixed emotions. As time passes, their feelings about the pandemic may change. This is normal for those who experience a natural disaster or other distressing event. Keep in mind that there may be days and times when you will feel better than others.

Keep Lines Of Communication Open – Ask Children How They Feel

Research conducted after previous disasters shows that parents, teachers, and other caregivers are often surprised by how much a child was affected. There can be many reasons for this. During one study (by La Greca and colleagues, 1996), children said that they did not tell their parents or other adults about their true feelings because the children noticed the adults were already upset and they didn't want to upset them further. Research also shows that parents are often not good observers of their child's post-disaster reactions. This is another reason why it is important for you to talk with your child directly to learn about his or her thoughts and feelings.

The activities in this section will help you understand how you and your child are feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also assist you in talking about feelings with your child and keeping the lines of communication open. It is a good idea to occasionally repeat these activities, as your child's feelings may change over time.

Adult Activity: How Do You Feel?

How do you feel about the COVID-19 pandemic? Write your feelings in the columns below. How have your feelings changed since the pandemic first started? What has stayed the same? If there are any strong emotions you have that you feel uncomfortable with, such as a lot of anger, fear or sadness, it may help to talk to someone about them.

How I felt when the pandemic first began

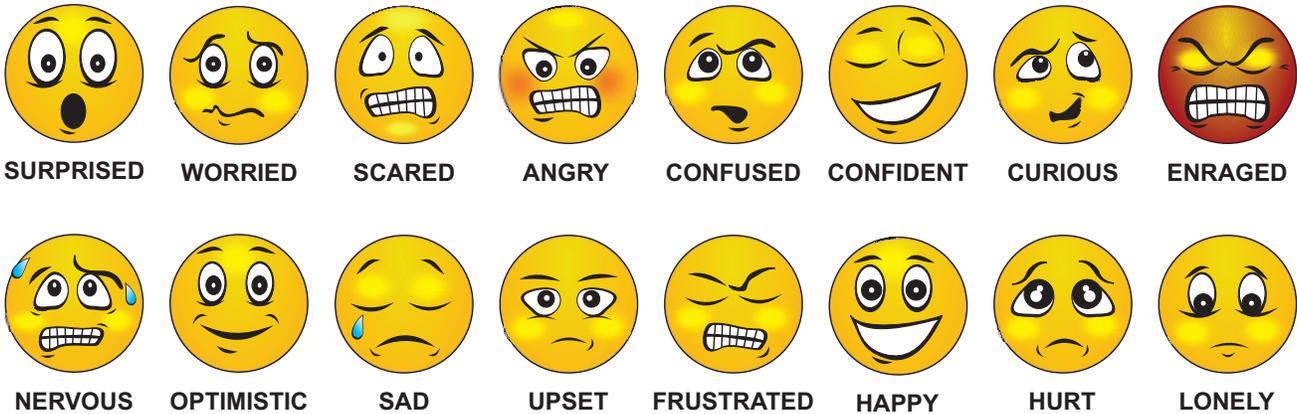
How I feel now



How I Feel About The COVID-19 Pandemic

When a pandemic happens, people usually have many different kinds of feelings. Some of those feelings may change over time. Complete the activities below to show how you have been feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Here are pictures and words that describe how some people have been feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic. Circle the faces or create new ones on a separate page to show how you feel about the pandemic. You can circle more than one.



2. The "Stress Gauge" below is like a rain gauge, except it measures feelings of stress instead of water. How stressed or upset are you because of the COVID-19 pandemic? Read the Stress Gauge first. Then, starting from the bottom, color in the gauge to the number that best shows how you are feeling. The number 1 means you feel very little stress. The number 10 means you feel a lot of stress and need some help.

HELP! Too much stress!





Tips For Talking To Children About Feelings

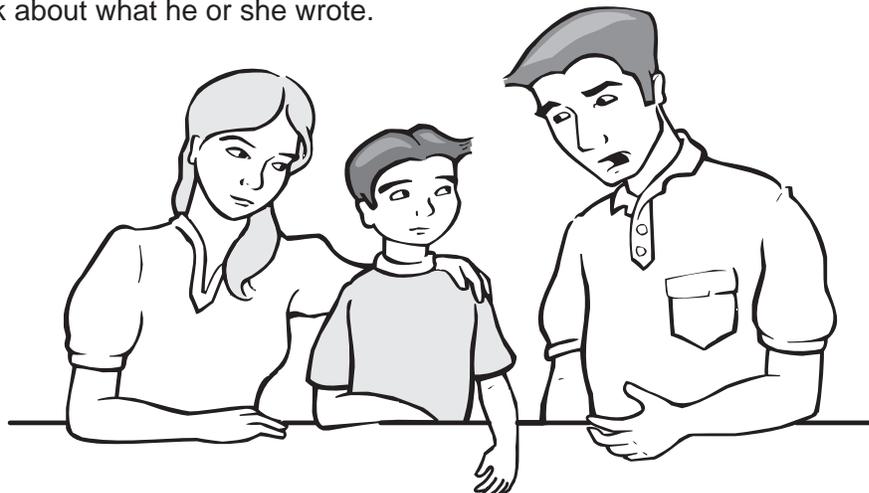
Over the next few weeks and months, there are likely to be more developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to understand how your child is reacting to these events, it will be important to keep the “lines of communication” open. This means creating a comfortable time and place for your child to talk with you about feelings or worries (see Talking With Children About COVID-19 on Page 5).

Sometimes your child’s concerns may have to do with the pandemic. Other times your child may focus on other events. Either way, the guidelines on this page will help you identify how your child is feeling and the focus of his or her concerns. Remember to be “calm and collected” before speaking with your child. If you feel you are having trouble with your own feelings, speak with another adult first.

Some guidelines for talking with your child:

- Listen to your child’s feelings rather than controlling the conversation yourself.
- Children often view the world differently from adults. Acknowledge your child’s perspectives by saying things like: *“I know it’s been hard...[to miss your friends, miss your favorite activities, etc.]”*
- Normalize your child’s statements by making comments like these:
“It’s okay to feel that way.” “It sounds like you are scared.” “That part made you feel sad.”
- Be neutral. Do not judge or criticize your child. Make comments like these:
“That’s interesting.” “Tell me more about it.” “What do you mean?”
- It’s okay to say *“I don’t know”* if your child asks a question you cannot answer.
- Express your own feelings, but try to avoid alarming or upsetting your child.
- Pay attention to behaviors that show your child has strong feelings, such as:
 - Fidgeting or squirming.
 - Poor eye contact (doesn’t look at you while talking).
 - Facial expressions that show anger, sadness, or worry.
- Keep in mind that listening to your child is a good way of showing emotional support. Research shows that children with greater emotional support after disasters report less stress (La Greca et al., 2010).

On the next page are sentences for your child to complete that will help him or her talk about their day and how they are feeling. You can copy the page and have your child keep a daily journal. Each evening, go over your child’s answers and talk about what he or she wrote.





How I Feel Today

How are you feeling today? Below are some sentences that will help you tell about your day and how you are feeling. Finish the sentences as best you can. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

My Name: _____

Today's Date: _____



Today, I _____

The best thing that happened to me today was _____

The thing that bothered me the most today was _____

Today, I played _____

What I thought about most today was _____

Tomorrow, I want to _____



Focus on Positive Ways to Cope

People cope with stress in many ways. You and your child have to find ways that work best for each of you. Because the COVID-19 pandemic keeps unfolding and changing, it is hard to know in advance what events you or your child may need to cope with. Regardless, you and your child will do better if you use positive coping strategies to deal with any stressful events that happen in life.

Unhelpful ways of coping can cause more harm than good. This is a particular concern if families must stay at home for an extended period of time. Yelling, getting angry, and blaming others are all examples of unhelpful ways to cope. These unhelpful ways can lead to new problems and increase already high stress levels. Children who use unhelpful ways of coping have more difficulty dealing with their reactions to stressful events, like a pandemic. It is important to recognize when your child is doing something unhelpful and instead help them find better ways to manage things.

The questions on the next page will reveal how your child copes with stress. Use the answer key below to help you understand your child's responses. Although you may not always know what specific events are upsetting your child, it is always helpful to encourage your child to use positive coping strategies.

Some Positive Coping Strategies

- Maintain normal routines.
- Talk with friends/family/coworkers.
- Take up a new hobby.
- Exercise/stay physically healthy.
- Take time for self care/get some rest.
- Reduce exposure to news/social media.
- Write about thoughts and experiences.
- Listen to soothing, calming music.
- Watch a favorite movie or TV show.
- Look at the positive side of things.
- Talk to a counselor/join a "virtual" support group.

Adult Activity: Identifying How You Cope

Children often learn positive or negative coping strategies from adults. Therefore, it will be useful to identify the ways you cope with stress. On a separate sheet of paper, write down how you have been coping with the pandemic or other recent stressful events. How do you react when you feel angry, scared or upset? You can use the items on the next page to help identify the ways you have been coping. If you are using some unhelpful ways, try to use some of the positive strategies in this book instead. You can even model these positive strategies for your child.

Key To Your Child's Coping (see test on the next page)

Positive Strategies: <i>Focus your child on these</i>	Negative Strategies: <i>Have your child avoid these</i>
Keeping a positive outlook (see #3)	Withdrawing from others (see #1, #2)
Problem solving (see # 6)	Blaming themselves or others (see #4, #5)
Keeping calm (see #9)	Wishful thinking (see #7)
Seeking support from others (see #12)	Angry feelings (see #8, #11)
Distraction (see #13)	Feeling helpless (see #10)



How I Cope With Things That Happen

Here is a list of things that people do to solve problems or to feel better when bad things happen. Think about what you have done to feel better about the COVID-19 pandemic or other bad things that have happened. Circle YES or NO to tell if you do the things listed in each sentence.

	<u>Do you do this?</u>	
1. I stay by myself.	YES	NO
2. I keep quiet about the bad things that happen.	YES	NO
3. I try to see the good side of things.	YES	NO
4. I blame myself for causing the virus to happen.	YES	NO
5. I blame someone else for causing the virus to happen.	YES	NO
6. I try to fix the bad things by doing something or talking to someone.	YES	NO
7. I always wish the bad things had never happened.	YES	NO
8. I yell, scream, or get mad.	YES	NO
9. I try to calm myself down.	YES	NO
10. I don't do anything because the bad things can't be fixed.	YES	NO
11. I get mad or angry at others.	YES	NO
12. I try to feel better by spending time with my family, other grownups, or friends.	YES	NO
13. I try to stay busy and keep my mind off things that are upsetting.	YES	NO

(Adapted from the KIDCOPE with permission of Anthony Spirito from: A., Stark, L.J., & Williams, C. (1988). Development of a brief checklist to assess in coping in pediatric patients. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 13, 555-574.)



Keep A Normal Routine

One of the most upsetting aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic is the disruption to everyday life. Normal activities and routines provide children and adults with a sense of comfort, as their days are more predictable. If these activities and routines are abruptly changed or disrupted, they can shake a person's feelings of safety and security.

During the pandemic, everyday activities and routines may be disrupted for a long period of time. Schools may close or switch to remote learning. Your child's extracurricular activities, such as dance classes or sports leagues, may be cancelled. Further, because of "social distancing," your child may not be able to spend time with family and friends in person. To assist in coping with these life disruptions, it will be helpful to establish a new routine for your child during the pandemic – a Plan B routine.



This section is designed to help you and your child develop a manageable "Plan B" routine. Using the form on the next page, have your child identify his or her normal daily routine on the left side of the paper. You can let your child fill out the form for both their normal weekday and weekend routines, as these routines usually differ. For young kids, this may be best done as a joint activity. Then, work with your child on the Joint Activity below and help them create a Plan B routine they can follow during the pandemic.

Adult Activity: Identify Your "Plan B" Routine

In stressful times like the COVID-19 pandemic, where many people are isolated in their homes, it is important to develop your own temporary routine to cope with the disruptions. Start by writing down your normal weekly routine. Then, write a plan for your new Plan B Routine. Try to keep as many elements of your normal routine as possible. When necessary, replace activities you can no longer do with similar ones. You can also add new activities that you have been interested in doing but never had a chance to do previously (such as learning a new hobby, skill or recipe). Try out your new Plan B Routine for a week and see how it goes. Then, make adjustments as needed. You may need to adjust your Plan B routine as the pandemic progresses.

Joint Activity: Create A "Plan B" Routine For Your Child

Together, review your child's "normal" routine on the left side of the next page. Then, together, come up with a new Plan B Routine they can follow during the COVID-19 pandemic. Write this plan on the right side of the page. Be creative and develop a plan that includes elements of your child's normal routine – but also works for your family's current circumstances as well. For example, have your child wake up and go to bed at the same time each day, have regular "school hours" or study time, and have regular times for meals, exercise, social activities and fun. You and your child can also make a list of favorite activities you enjoy doing together and add some of these shared activities to both of your schedules.



My Routines

Most people have a daily routine, which means they do the same things at about the same time each day. For example, you may wake up, go to school, eat lunch and come home around the same time every day. What is your normal daily routine? On the left side, write down the things that you would do on a normal day and the time that you usually do them.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, many people had to change their daily routines. Maybe your routine has changed as well. Work with an adult to create a new routine you can do during the pandemic. Be sure to include times for waking up, meals, schoolwork, having fun or relaxing, talking with friends or family, and bedtime. Then, write this new routine down on the right side of the page. You can call it your Plan B routine!

What I normally do

Time	Activity
In the morning:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
In the afternoon:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
In the evening:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Before bedtime:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

My Plan B Routine

Time	Activity
In the morning:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
In the afternoon:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
In the evening:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Before bedtime:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Reduce Media Exposure

You can help children cope with the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing their exposure to upsetting news and images of the pandemic. Research shows that children who view upsetting images of traumatic events (such as people dying) report more distress than those not exposed to such images. This is because visual images are ways of experiencing a traumatic event. Disturbing visual images can lead to increased fears, worries, bad dreams, and trouble sleeping. In addition, limiting children's use of social media can be helpful because a lot of misinformation (such as fake news or rumors) spreads that way.

Help your child avoid media images that can be upsetting. Limit your child's viewing of news programs on TV or of photos and videos on the Internet. Limit their social media use as well. In particular, limit programs or websites with images of sick people, death and destruction, or stories about families who were separated or hurt by COVID-19.

Prepare vs. Scare

Many news stations and websites report events in a dramatic and sometimes scary way. One way to reduce stress is to turn the television or computer off once you and your family have the information you need. Too much viewing will scare (and create fears and worries), rather than prepare.

Adult Activity: Develop Your Own Media Viewing Guide

Develop a plan to promote positive viewing habits. This will help limit your child's exposure to upsetting pictures or videos related to the pandemic or other scary events. Follow these rules:

LIMIT – the amount of time your child watches television or surfs the Internet unattended. Choose ahead how much time your child can watch TV or use the computer or smart phone each day. Limit your own time as well to set a good example. Use parental settings on devices whenever possible.

PLAN – with your child, in advance, what TV programs to watch or which websites to visit. Use parental control features to restrict access to certain cable channels, television programs or websites. Turn off electronics when time is up.

PARTICIPATE – in watching TV programs or surfing the Internet with your child. You can occasionally ask if there is anything that your child has questions about or that bothers them. Turn a program off if it becomes upsetting and talk to your child about it.

ENCOURAGE – your child to engage in other fun activities like reading, exercise, or a hobby. Have some non-electronic games or activities available (puzzles, board games, etc.). These activities provide a distraction from upsetting events and help your child feel more in control.

Joint Activity: Try Something New

It is important to stay informed as to what is happening with the pandemic. But, do not spend a lot of time watching crisis information on TV or on the Internet. Also, be careful of rumors and misinformation that is spread through social media. It can add to already high stress levels. You have to find a balance. The COVID-19 pandemic can be a perfect time to learn a new skill or try something you have always wanted to do but never had the time to do before. For example, you can learn a new language, try a new recipe, or start a new hobby. Review your child's responses from the next page. Help your child choose one or two things from their "something new" list to try during the pandemic. Then, together with your child, think of a fun new activity you can try or learn together. Add this to your weekly routine.



What I Like To Do



My Favorite Things:

What are some of your favorite things? List your favorites for each category below.

My favorite hobbies are:

My favorite sports are:

My favorite family activities are:

My favorite games are:

My favorite foods are:



Something New

One good thing about the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has allowed time for people to learn about or try new things. Sometimes it is hard for people to learn or try new things because they don't have time in their normal life. But now, with many people staying home, they have more time. For example, some people are learning to play a new musical instrument. Others are learning to speak a new language. And some are trying out a new skill, like a magic trick or card trick. What new things are you interested in doing or learning more about? Write these below.

New Things I Want to Try or Learn About:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Stay Healthy And Fit

Stress affects people physically as well as mentally. During and after a stressful event, many people do not feel like eating or may have trouble sleeping. These changes make it harder to cope with stress. They can also weaken a person's immune system. It is important to stay active and healthy during the pandemic, even if you are mainly at home. A child who is healthy and fit will find it easier to cope with stress. In fact, all of us do better when we feel strong and healthy.

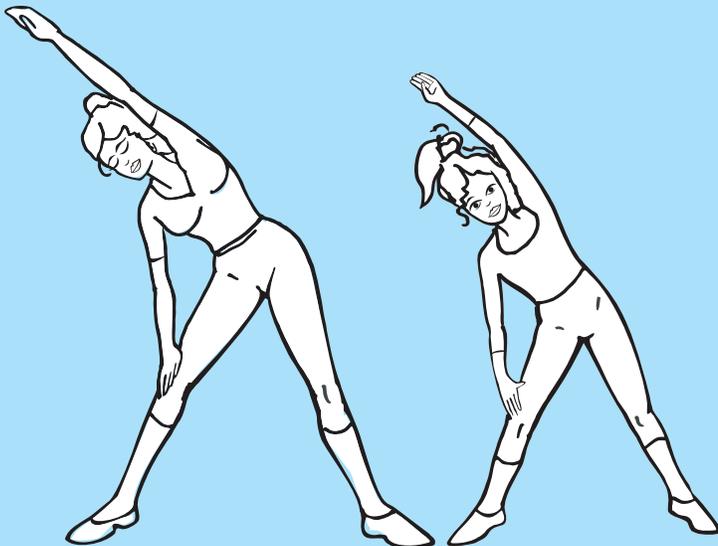
The activities in this section will help you identify your child's eating, sleeping, and exercise habits. They are also designed to help improve your child's overall health, including diet and physical condition.

Adult Activity: Track Your Child's Health

Observe your child over the next few days. Note any of your child's health behaviors that are a problem. Write down any problems you notice in the following categories: Eating, Sleeping, Exercise and Physical Complaints. If there are areas that need improvement, work with your child to create a "Healthy Checklist Chart." List things you and your child can do to be healthier. Some examples are:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Eating:</u></p> <p>Eat green vegetables. Have a regular family mealtime. Eat healthy snacks (raisins, carrots). Eat a favorite food as a treat.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sleeping:</u></p> <p>Sleep in a cool, dark room (or with a night-light if afraid of the dark). Snuggle with a favorite doll or stuffed animal. Play soft music before bedtime. Count backwards from 100.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Exercise:</u></p> <p>Learn a new exercise. Take a walk every day. Develop an exercise routine.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Physical Complaints:</u></p> <p>Communicate with a family doctor. Practice a relaxation exercise to reduce stress. Take vitamins.</p>

JOINT ACTIVITY: Create A Weekly Exercise Routine

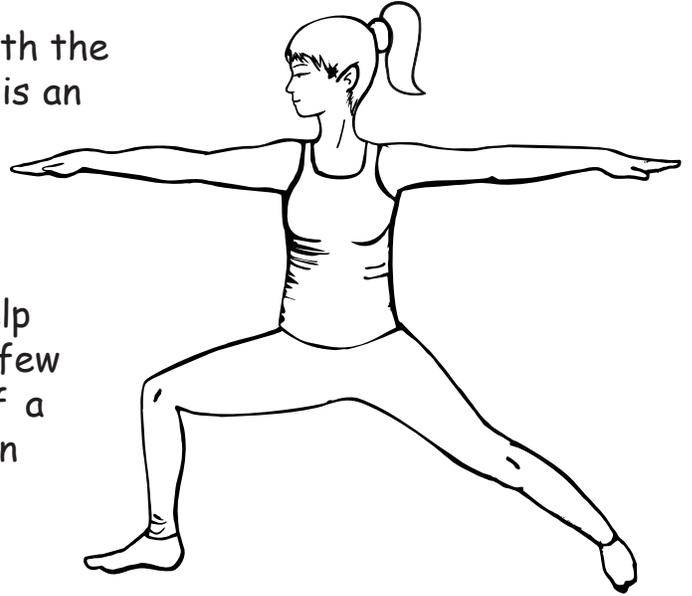


COVID-19 has caused major disruptions to children's weekly routines. Exercise is one area that has been disrupted. With sports leagues and events cancelled, and outdoor exercise limited, it will help to identify a temporary exercise routine for your child (and revise it as the COVID-19 situation changes). On the next page is an exercise chart for your child to keep track of their weekly exercises. Help your child identify exercises they can do in or around your home during the pandemic. Then, help your child set up a weekly exercise routine. Consider contacting your child's doctor or their school's physical education coach for some ideas. Give your child a reward each week that they complete their daily exercise routine!



Stay Healthy - Stay Fit

By staying healthy, you can deal better with the things that bother you. Getting exercise is an important way to stay healthy. Below is a chart for you to keep track of your weekly exercises. On the left, write down exercises you would like to do or try. Talk with an adult to help you decide which ones to list. Choose a few exercises to do each day. Give yourself a star for each day that you complete an exercise. When the week is over, add up the number of stars to see how you do!



My Weekly Exercise Routine

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Exercise 1							
Exercise 2							
Exercise 3							
Exercise 4							
Exercise 5							
Exercise 6							
Exercise 7							
Exercise 8							
Weekly Total							



Keep a Positive Outlook

It can be difficult to keep a positive outlook given all the sad news in the media and disruptions to people's lives because of COVID-19. But research shows that people cope better with stress if they have hope and keep a positive attitude. Research also suggests that being optimistic can promote better immunity against infection. So, not only will a positive outlook help you and your family cope better with the pandemic, it may also boost your immune system.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Pandemic Positives

History shows that in every disaster or tragedy, there are some positive outcomes. For example, after the 2009 "Swine Flu" pandemic, researchers studying the response found that residents in Hong Kong adopted better hygiene habits that would help prevent the spread of future diseases.

What are some positives of the COVID-19 pandemic for you and your child? For example, maybe you spend more time together? Or maybe you learned a new skill? On a sheet of paper, write down some of the positive ways the COVID-19 pandemic has helped your family. Then, think about and list other positives that the pandemic has had for your community or the world. Some of these positive changes may be difficult for your child to express, such as feeling closer to siblings or reconnecting with other family members.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from previous pandemics can also help inform future ones. For example, research after the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic showed that cities which implemented early and extensive interventions (similar to what we are calling "social distancing" and "stay at home" orders today) had lower death rates and recovered much quicker and stronger economically after the pandemic ended than cities which did not.

Together with your child, write down some lessons you have learned that can help other families and communities better prepare for future pandemics. You can add to this list as time goes on. You can even send your list to a government agency or disaster relief organization as recommendations to consider for future disaster preparations.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Hope For The Future

Focusing on the future can be a positive activity. After all, pandemics don't last forever. Every pandemic in human history has ended after a period of time. It can help to look towards the future and have plans to do some fun activities after the pandemic ends. What would you and your family like to do? The child activity on the next page asks your child to write down some ideas for what he or she would like to do. You and other members of your family can write lists of your own. Then, hold a family meeting to compare your lists. During your family meeting, create a special "Family List" of activities you can do together once the pandemic ends. You can break activities down into categories, such as "people you would like to see," "places you would like to visit," "trips you would like to go on," "restaurants you would like to eat at," and "events you would like to see." Post this list on a refrigerator or other obvious place in your home where everyone can see.



Keep A Positive Outlook

1. What are some of the positive things that happened to you or your family since the COVID-19 pandemic first started? Below, write down some good things that have happened since the pandemic began. Some of these may be hard to explain, such as you feel closer to a family member. Write these down, too.

My "Good Things" List

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2. Have you thought about what you would like to do once the COVID-19 pandemic ends? In each category below, write down what you would like to do when the pandemic ends?

Friends and family I want to see:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Things I want to do:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Places I want to visit:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Sports I want to play or watch:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |



Help Others and Give Thanks

Helping others and giving thanks are positive ways to cope with feelings. In fact, research shows that “helping others” and “expressing thanks” leads to positive emotions. These activities can help children feel they are doing something positive during a difficult time. They also teach children about the virtues of compassion, kindness and doing good deeds.

There are many ways children can help during the pandemic. For example, while at home, children can do something as simple as opening a door for somebody, completing a chore, assisting with a home improvement project or helping raise money online for a local non-profit. Be creative; have your child use their talents and strengths to think of ways to help others.

Help Others by Volunteering

Volunteering your time to assist a worthy cause or help others is also an excellent way to cope with the pandemic. While you may not be able to volunteer “in person,” you can help remotely. Contact your local United Way, a local community foundation or a community-service organization that interests you and ask how you might be able to help during the pandemic. You can even contact a local hospital to see if they need volunteers to make masks or other needed supplies for medical staff. Encourage your child to volunteer as well by choosing projects that you can work on together.

One great volunteer activity you and your child can do at home during the pandemic is to help scientists conduct important research from your home computer! An **excellent website to find people-powered research opportunities is Zooniverse.**

www.zooniverse.org

Giving Thanks!

Giving thanks can be done in many ways. For example, children can write emails or letters, or create and send thank you cards or short videos. They can also make a small donation to a non-profit or charity in honor of the person they are thankful for. Children can send notes of appreciation to front line medical workers (e.g., doctors, nurses) or first responders (e.g., firefighters, police, paramedics) to thank them for their help and support during the pandemic. Children can also put a thank you note or drawing on the front door to thank people who continue to deliver the mail, packages or food.

For ideas on ways to express thanks, check out:

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/raising-grateful-kids-why-giving-thanks-is-good-for-the-soul>

JOINT ACTIVITY: Something To Be Thankful for Everyday

Giving thanks works best when it is a routine practice. Parents can model “giving thanks” and encourage their children to practice gratitude daily. At dinnertime, bedtime, or any other time when you and your child are together, share something you noticed that you are thankful for (such as a nice meal, a polite gesture, a beautiful sunset). Then, ask your child to share something that they are thankful for. Make this a routine practice. You can even keep a diary and write down one thing you are both thankful for each day.



Give Thanks Everyday

Use the form below or find a notebook that you can write in. Then, every day, think of one thing you are thankful for! It can be something about your family or friends, something like a good meal, or even just something you noticed that day (such as a beautiful flower, a sunny day or a happy feeling).



Today, I am thankful for...

Mon: _____

Tue: _____

Wed: _____

Thu: _____

Fri: _____

Sat: _____

Sun: _____

At least once a week, tell someone how thankful you are. It can be about something nice they did for you, or for a gift they gave you, or just because they have been helpful in some way. You can share your thanks by telling that person directly or writing them a thank-you note.

My Thank You Note:

Dear _____,

Sincerely, _____



Stay Relaxed

An important part of caring for your family and friends is taking care of your own emotional and health needs. After all, you can't be there to help others, including your child, if you are not doing okay. Self care becomes even more important in times of stress, such as the current pandemic (see Page 6). Both adults and children can practice self care. This section provides some ideas you and your child can try at home.

Relaxation: One helpful self-care technique is called relaxation, where you focus on relaxing all areas of your body, from head to toe. When you let go of tension in your body, your mind can also relax. A relaxed mind can think more clearly. This helps with problem solving, conflict resolution and overcoming challenges. A relaxed body and calm mind also helps adults and children cope with stress. The joint activity below is a great relaxation activity to try with your child. On the next page is another relaxation activity your child can try. You can help your child with this activity until he or she feels comfortable doing it on their own.

Mindfulness: Another self-care strategy that can reduce stress is a practice called mindfulness. Mindfulness allows people to focus on the present moment, instead of focusing on the past or the future. If you feel overwhelmed with the fast pace of the pandemic, constantly changing information, or worry about the future, this strategy can help. Mindfulness helps you focus on the “here and now,” and helps make life’s challenges “bite-sized” and more manageable.

Relaxation and mindfulness techniques take practice. If you practice them at least once a day, they can help reduce the effects of stress and help keep you calm during challenging times.

Adult Activity: Focus On Your Five Senses

Sit or lie down in a comfortable place. Think about 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. As you think of those things, imagine you are experiencing them. Celebrate the aroma of your favorite food coming out of the oven, the soothing sounds of waves lapping up on a beach, the deep violet and green color of a wildflower, the warmth of soft clothes coming out of a dryer, or the taste of your favorite food on the tip of your tongue. Focusing on your senses can really anchor you in the present and help you to relax in the moment.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Belly Breathing

Sit comfortably in a chair. Close your eyes and relax your body. Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your belly, just below your ribs. Now, take a deep, long breathe through your nose while slowly counting to 5. Pay attention to your hands. When you inhale, your chest should not move, but your belly should push your hand out. Hold your breath for a second. Then, breathe out slowly through your mouth while counting to 5. Slowly let all the air out. Repeat this process 5 to 10 times. Practice this on your own first. When you feel confident, you can teach your child how to belly breathe. Once you have both learned to belly breathe, it is a lifelong skill you can practice together!

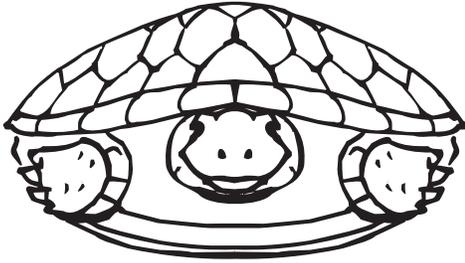
For more mindfulness ideas, see: *25 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children & Teens*
<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>



A Relaxed Turtle Says: Stay Calm and Carry On

It is normal to feel scared or upset sometimes. When this happens, it can make you feel very uncomfortable. But there are some things you can do to feel better. Here is a great exercise you can do when you feel scared or upset. It's called the Turtle Technique!

Do you know what happens when turtles feel scared? They go into their shells to calm down and feel safer. You can also create a shell to relax in when you feel scared, mad or upset. You can create a shell in different ways. You can put your head down, you can go to a quiet corner in a room, you can wrap your arms around your body, you can go to a separate room with no one in it, or you can simply just close your eyes. Maybe you have some other ideas?



Below, write down three ways in which you will go into your shell when you feel scared or upset.

My Shell 1: _____

My Shell 2 _____

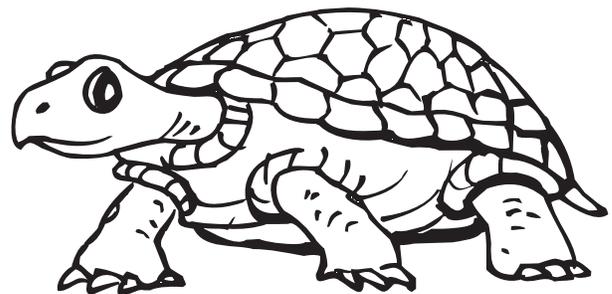
My Shell 3 _____

Once you are in your turtle shell, it is important to relax. Here are some things you can do to relax:

- 1) Take a few deep breaths. Breathe in and out very slowly. Feel your stomach go in and out like a balloon.
- 2) Count to 10 or 20 very slowly.
- 3) Close your eyes and imagine something you really enjoy, such as sitting on a beach in the sun, floating on the water, or some other calm image.

When you feel better, you can come out of your shell!

Once you have mastered the turtle technique, you can teach it to the rest of your family. Then, you can all try it together!





Coping with Fears and Worries: What Do You Worry About?

When stressful events occur, children and adults often feel fearful and worried. These feelings are common, especially with a pandemic like COVID-19 that can cause a lot of health problems and disrupt everyone's lives. Pandemics can bring a whole new set of fears and worries that may not have been present before. They also can increase existing fears. As the pandemic unfolds, it will be common for children and adults to worry about their personal health and safety, the health and safety of loved ones, and what may happen in the future.

In general, fears and worries are normal. However, if they interfere with your child's activities (e.g., keeping them from doing schoolwork or interacting with family and friends), then your child will need help in dealing with them. To help your child cope with his or her worries, you must understand the kinds of things your child worries about. This section is designed to help you and your child identify and cope with fears and worries.

Keep in mind that although your child may express fears related to the COVID-19 pandemic, he or she may be worried or even more concerned about other things. Also, since worries can be learned or worsened through viewing TV and other media sources, we included a section to help reduce media use (see Page 19). You also might find a relaxation exercise helpful (see Page 27). Because your child's worries may change over time, it is a good idea to repeat this section periodically.

Adult Activity – What Are Your Worries?

Children can “learn” about sources of fear and worry by observing or listening to the adults around them, such as their parents and teachers. Because of this, it will help to identify the things you worry about, and that you might unintentionally communicate to your child. On a sheet of paper, write down the fears and worries you currently have. You can divide these into topics, such as worries concerning your family, your job, your health, your relationships, or your community. When you are finished, highlight the things that bother you the most.

FAMILY	WORK / SCHOOL	HEALTH	RELATIONSHIPS	COMMUNITY

Adult Activity – Your Child's Worries

Do you know what your child worries about? Often, parents are surprised by the kinds of things that bother their children or underestimate their child's concerns. While your child completes the activity on the next page, make a list of the things that you think he or she worries about. Highlight the ones you feel bother your child the most. When finished, compare your answers with your child's. Which worries did you get correct? Which ones did you miss? Which of your child's fears or worries surprised you, if any?





Overcoming Fears And Worries

Although fears and worries are common and normal, they can become a problem. Learning how to cope with them is important. In general, talking to someone, gradually facing fears, and finding practical solutions are all positive ways of coping with fears and worries.

Talk with someone – Sometimes worries lessen when a child has someone to share them with. Help your child identify “worry friends” he or she can talk with when feeling worried or scared (see activity on Page 32). List people at home (e.g., parents, older siblings), in school (e.g., school counselor), and in the community (e.g., friends, relatives). Keep a list of your child’s worry friends and their phone numbers on a piece of paper, and let your child keep a copy. Encourage your child to contact a worry friend regularly. This may help your child to feel better. You also can set up a regular “talk time” with your child, to see how they are feeling.

Face fears gradually – Children who are able to face fears in a gradual and safe manner often become less fearful. For example, a child who is nervous about a parent leaving the house to buy groceries may become less fearful if a parent leaves and returns home safely on several occasions. Encourage your child to be brave and stay strong. Reward your child for being brave and facing fears. Do not reward your child’s fears by letting your child avoid school or chores, or by giving in to your child’s wishes because of fears and worries.

Find practical solutions – Often, a worry can be lessened by thinking of a practical and simple plan to master that worry. For example, if your child is worried about keeping up with schoolwork, try to think of ways to help your child cope with this worry. You can help your child find a quiet place to do schoolwork, check in with your child periodically during the day (if working at home) to see if they have any schoolwork-related questions, and even ask the teacher to assign a “classroom buddy” to assist your child in reviewing or checking work together. These simple solutions may help your child feel better about school and bolster their support system.

Joint Activity – Develop A Worry-Buster Plan

Developing a “Worry-Buster” plan to help your child deal with their fears or worries can be a fun activity. Use some blank note cards or similar sized pieces of paper. On one side, have your child write down a fear or worry that bothers them (see Child Activity on Page 30). Then, together, think of positive things your child can do to “bust that worry” and feel better! Write these helpful ideas on the back of the card. Your child can memorize the cards or carry copies with them. See the example below.



Front (Worry):

I might get sick from COVID-19.

Back (Worry-buster):

- Review strategies for saying safe (e.g. wash hands, social distancing, stay indoors).
- Limit viewing of TV/media coverage about virus.
- Talk with your child and answer any questions.



Front (Worry):

I won't be able to see my friends.

Back (Worry-buster):

- Let your child talk/text their friends on the phone.
- Plan virtual “play dates.”
- Find a TV show/movie your child and friend can “watch” together.



Coping With Worries

Sometimes worries can be very upsetting. When a worry upsets you, it is important to talk with a parent or other adult about it. Talking about the things that bother you will help you feel better about them. Who can you talk to about your fears or worries? Think of some "worry friends" and list them below. A "worry friend" is someone you trust and can talk to when you feel upset or worried. Choose one or two adults (from home, from your school, and in your community) who can be your "worry friends." Ask a parent or other adult to help you with this activity.

My Worry Friends:

At Home: _____

At School: _____

In The Community: _____

Another way to help you feel better about your worries is to create a Worry-Buster plan. Pick five of the worries you listed on Page 30 that bother you a lot and write them below. Then, with an adult, think of things you can do to beat that worry! Write your plan to **BUST THAT WORRY** on the right side.



My WORRY



My WORRY-BUSTER PLAN

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.



Coping With Angry Feelings

It is not unusual for children and adults to have angry feelings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Everybody feels stressed because life is more difficult. Disruptions may occur on and off for a long period of time, which can add to already high levels of stress. While things may be frustrating, remember that many people are in a similar situation. You and your child must find positive ways to deal with angry feelings.

Children may want to “blame others” for bad things that happen or may just be more irritable than usual. If your child is feeling angry or irritable, explain that it is okay to feel that way. This is a very normal feeling. Explain, however, that it is NOT okay to take out angry feelings on other people. For example, it is okay to feel angry, but not okay to fight and argue with others. Also, it is not okay to do something mean to someone else or to an animal.

The activities in this section will help your child manage angry feelings and resolve conflicts with others. They also will help you develop a plan for managing your child’s anger.

Adult Activity: Develop An Anger Management Plan

Keep a brief diary of your child’s behavior over the next few days. Take notes on what happens before, during, and after each angry outburst. Use this to develop an “anger management” plan.

Before – Who does your child get angry at? What situations trigger the anger?

During – What does your child do when angry? What is his or her behavior?

After – What happens after? Do you discipline your child? Do you ignore the behavior?

If your child gets angry or annoyed at the same person or in the same situation, **try changing the situation** to prevent the angry outbursts. For example, if your child gets angry when a sibling changes the television channel, it may help to have family rules about television viewing. You also can have your child “talk through” angry feelings with the person who is the target.

Also, look at what happens after your child gets angry. Does your child get his or her way? Try not to ignore angry behavior or to “give in” to your child’s misbehavior. Instead, calmly explain that “feeling angry” is okay, but “acting angry” is not. Have your child sit quietly until they calm down and then talk over what is bothering them to see if the situation can be resolved. If this doesn’t work, you may have to discipline your child (miss a favorite TV show, go to bed a half hour earlier, do an extra chore, etc.).

One way to help prevent angry outbursts is to have a Calm Down Corner at home (See Page 41). Encourage your child to visit their corner when they start to feel themselves getting angry.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Role Playing

Have your child complete the activities on the following page. Afterward, go over your child’s ideas for helpful things to do when feeling angry. Help identify additional things they can do (e.g., writing, drawing, visit a calm down corner). Then, play a “pretend” game with your child. You pretend to do something annoying and your child has to practice one of the positive things listed in the activity at the bottom of Page 35. Involve other family members as well.



Keep Calm: Manage Your Angry Feelings

Some people may be feeling angry, irritable or upset. They may feel this way because the COVID-19 pandemic can cause a lot of changes and has made life harder for them and their families.

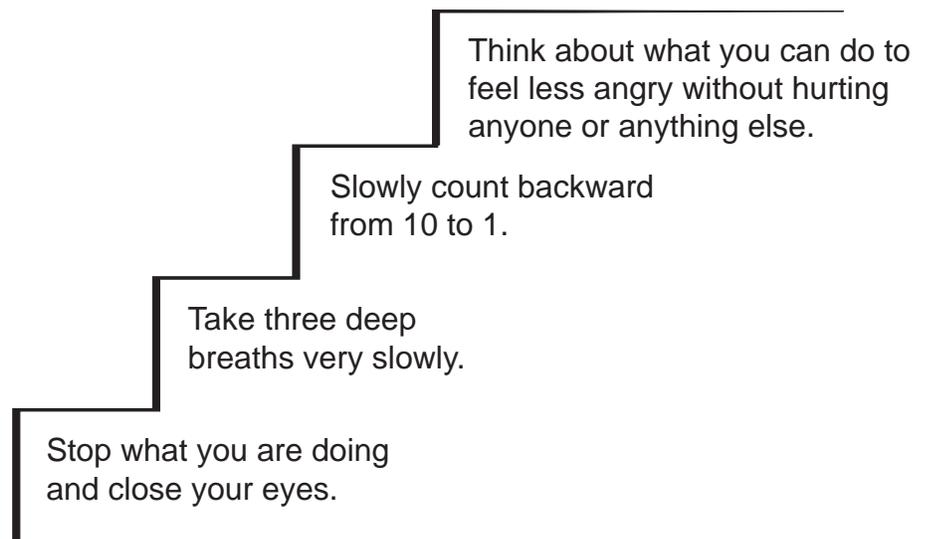
1. Below, write down the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has made life harder for you. Use another sheet of paper if you need more room.

Example: I haven't been able to see my friends and play sports outside.

2. Life may also be harder for your family and friends. Below, write how you think things are harder for the rest of your family and friends.

Example: My parents can't go to work because of the pandemic.

Sometimes when bad things happen, people get angry or upset more than normal. It is okay to feel angry, but it is not okay to take your angry feelings out on other people. If you are angry with someone or get into an argument, it will help if you follow these simple steps:



3. On a separate sheet of paper, draw or write about "helpful" things you can do when you feel angry or get into an argument with someone. If you need some ideas, ask an adult for help.



Coping With Sadness And Loss

During and even after the COVID-19 pandemic, children and adults may feel sadness or loss. Many people experience these feelings, especially those who had significant changes in their way of life or lost a loved one. Even if people do not lose a loved one or have life changes, they may still feel sad. Sometimes people feel sad for those who lost a friend, family member, job or business during the pandemic. People also may feel sad because they don't know how to help the situation, because they feel alone, or because things just "aren't the same" since the pandemic began.

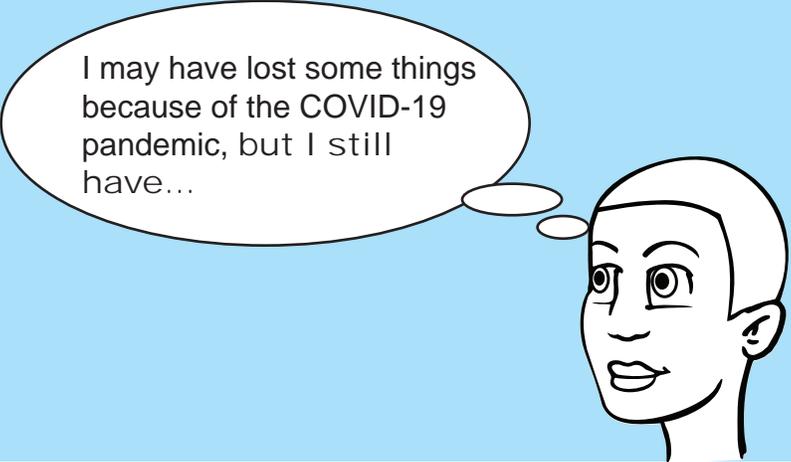
The activities in this section will help you and your child identify and talk about feelings of sadness and loss.

In general, there are some things that can help when you or your child feel sad:

- Focus on the positive things you have (health, loved ones, friends, etc.).
- Stay connected - talk to a friend or family member when feeling "blue."
- Stay active by doing things you normally enjoy – even if you don't feel like it.
- Exercise (see Stay Healthy And Fit on Page 21)
- Do things to help others (see Help Others And Give Thanks on Page 25).
- Express gratitude or thanks (see Help Others And Give Thanks on Page 25).

JOINT ACTIVITY: Positive Coping Ideas:

Together, complete the activity on the next page. Focusing on the things you did not lose is a helpful way of coping with sadness and loss. Your child may need help because some things can be hard to name or draw (e.g., loss of a sense of safety). When your child is finished, discuss some positive things he or she can do to feel better.



I may have lost some things because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I still have...

Some additional resources on coping with sadness and loss

Child Mind Institute

Helping Children Cope With Grief

<https://childmind.org/guide/helping-children-cope-grief/>

KidsHealth from Nemours

Why am I so sad?

<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/sadness.html>



When Do Normal Feelings Of Sadness Become A Problem?

The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful for most people. All around the world, people's lives have changed. It has been hard for children and adults to spend time with friends and family or to do activities they normally enjoy. The uncertainty of the pandemic, coupled with social distancing and "stay at home" rules, has made many people feel sad, isolated, uneasy and, at times, overwhelmed. These feelings are normal reactions to a stressful situation that is challenging and hard to control, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although feelings of sadness and loss are normal reactions to stress, they can become a problem if the feelings last for a long time or if they interfere with personal relationships, schoolwork, or job performance. Also, some children and adults may have felt sad or depressed even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, the pandemic may make those feelings stronger. Some children and adults may feel that the situation is hopeless or that they don't want to go on any more. If any of these things happen to you or your child, it is important to seek professional advice or counseling to cope with the feelings. Below are some signs of depression that children (and adults) may show.

Some signs of depression include:

- Persistent feelings of sadness or depressed mood.
- Irritability (in children).
- Loss of interest in usual activities.
- Fatigue or low energy.
- Change in appetite or weight (increase or decrease).
- Change in sleep (insomnia or too much sleep).
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling worthless.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.
- Feeling helpless or hopeless.

Often the signs to the left
are also seen with:

- Frequent physical complaints.
- Difficulties in personal relationships with family or friends.
- Poor school or work performance.
- Social withdrawal.

If feelings last for several weeks or interfere with your daily life, it may help to seek professional advice and counseling. Depression is a serious condition that affects a person's body, moods, and thoughts. Like diabetes or heart disease, depression requires professional treatment. If you think someone may be suffering from depression, encourage them to contact a mental health professional. If left untreated, depression can lead to long-term problems.

For more information on depression, see:
<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of
suicide, call the

National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE:

1-800-273-8255



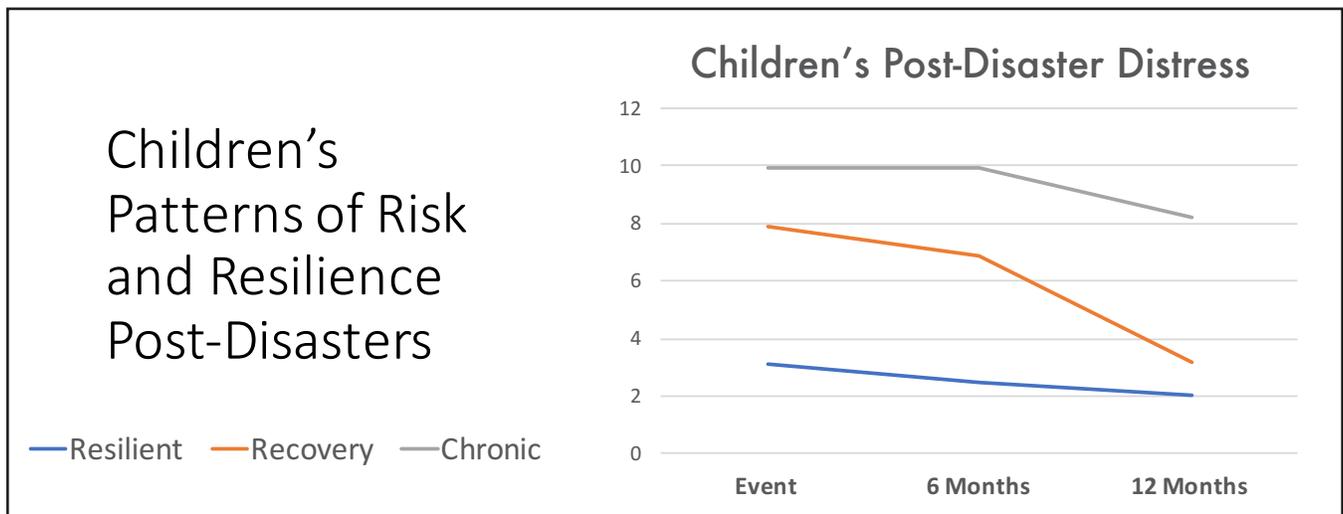
Seeking Help For Children At Risk

Although many children are experiencing stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that **most children are resilient** and will be okay if they have a little help and support. Research after many different types of disasters, including hurricanes, earthquakes, and terrorist events like 9/11, shows that the vast majority of children who are initially distressed do recover over time (see Bonanno et al., 2010; La Greca et al., 2013).

However, research also shows that a small minority of children, typically less than 20%, are at risk for a slow recovery or long-term difficulties. These “at risk” children may need extra help to recover from stressors such as COVID-19. In fact, one of the reasons we developed this parent-child manual is to help children get on the path to recovery. Yet, some children will need more help than parents (and this manual) can provide.

Research shows that children’s disaster-related distress can be described in one of three ways:

1. Some children are **resilient**. They might be a bit distressed at first, but mostly seem calm, cool, and collected.
2. Other children may be distressed for a while, but gradually **recover over time**. This often is the largest group of children. So, even if your child is distressed, it is likely that he or she will do better over time, especially with your support.
3. Finally, other children appear **chronically distressed**. They have high distress levels and do not recover much over time. These children may benefit from receiving professional help.



How to tell if your child fits the chronic pattern and needs professional help?

Many children who fit the chronic pattern (above) often have challenges even before a disaster. In general, research indicates that children are more likely to have chronic problems after a disaster if they have:

- **Behavior or learning problems** (e.g., autism spectrum, ADHD, learning disability) even before the disaster. For example, a child with autism may find it hard to adjust to the change in daily routines and hard to learn without individual, specialized attention. A child with ADHD or other learning problems may now struggle with schoolwork and with staying “on task” while attending school remotely.
- **Emotional problems even before the disaster**. For example, children who felt anxious or sad even before the pandemic may find that their fears or sadness have increased.
- **Little social support** from friends or family.
- **Major life stressors** occurring, such as a close family member or friend dying, or parental divorce or conflict in the home.
- **Poor strategies for coping with stress**, such as yelling at others, or blaming themselves or others for what happened. These strategies reflect poor emotion regulation, and create more stress for children and adults.



Children also are at risk for chronic distress if they experience the following because of the pandemic:

- **Lost a loved one** (family member, friend).
- **Have a parent who is a medical worker, a first responder (e.g., police), or a military member.** These children may be worried or scared that their loved one is in danger. They also may miss being able to physically be with the parent due to concerns about virus transmission.

When should I seek professional help for my child?

Consider seeking professional help for your child if your child fits one or more of the “at risk” descriptions above **and is experiencing a lot of COVID-19 related stress (see Page 12) that does not seem to be getting better.** It also is a good idea to seek help if your child is so bothered by the pandemic or related events that he or she is **having a very hard time in school, at home, or with family members and friends.**

In general, the same advice applies to adults! If you are distressed and your stress reactions do not improve or they interfere with your everyday life, you should consider seeking professional help.

Where to seek help?

You can seek help for your child from local mental health professionals (e.g., psychologists, social workers, school counselors, etc.). For non-emergencies, you can find a psychologist via the American Psychological Association’s website at <http://locator.apa.org>. You also can **call 2-1-1** or ask your child’s **doctor for a referral.**

We especially recommend seeking help from psychologists who are trained in evidence-based strategies for child mental health, such as those affiliated with the American Psychological Association. See the link below.

You can find information about how and where to seek help – and directories for local providers – by going to the website for Effective Child Therapy: <https://effectivechildtherapy.org/tips-tools/advice-for-selecting-a-psychologist/>

Where can I get emergency professional help for my child or another family member?

If you or your child needs emergency help right away, **call 9-1-1** or check the government listings of your local phone book for “mental health crisis hotlines.”

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number is **1-800-273-TALK** (1-800-273-8255).



Staying Connected

“Staying connected” with friends and family is a very important part of coping with disasters and stressful events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Close family and friends provide emotional support that is needed to cope with challenging stressors. Research shows that social support from family and friends reduces children’s feelings of distress and contributes to their positive physical and mental health. And, family and friends are an important source of fun!

Staying connected during the COVID-19 pandemic can be especially challenging because of social distancing restrictions as well as the closing of schools, parks, and recreational activities (where children learn and play with others). Children especially miss friends that they see often during or after school. This means parents need to be creative in finding ways for their child to stay connected with friends and family!

This book is designed for parents to work together with their children. Just doing the activities in the book is one important way you and your child can “stay connected.” Below are some other ideas your child can try out!



Ways for children to stay connected with friends and family

- Talk on the phone.
- Send a text message to say “hi” or send a joke or photo to let someone know you are thinking of them.
- Connect to friends or family via videoconferencing.
- Write a letter or make a video to send to family or friends who live far away.

Many smart devices like tablets and phones have free apps that can be used to connect with others. Once connected, your child can participate in fun social activities together with their friends and family, such as watching a movie, playing a game, and telling jokes. Check out the resources below for some more ideas.

Some additional resources on helping children stay connected:

University of Maryland Medical System

Staying Connected While Practicing Social Distancing

<https://www.umms.org/coronavirus/what-to-know/staying-in/staying-connected>

11 Super Fun Ways to Keep Kids Social, by Nicole Fabian-Weber

<https://www.care.com/c/stories/16717/keep-kids-connected-social-distancing/>



Create A Calm Down Corner

Is your child having difficulty controlling their emotions, having angry outbursts, crying spells or getting into lots of fights with siblings during the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, consider creating a Calm Down Corner in your home! Research shows that calm down corners can be effective in teaching children social and emotional skills while also lessening outbursts and problem behaviors. In fact, many teachers successfully use calm down corners in classrooms around the country.

What It Is: A Calm Down Corner is a small, quiet area that your child or children can go to when they get overwhelmed, sad, worried, frustrated, angry or upset and need some space to calm down and process their feelings. You don't need a lot of materials to create a calm down corner. Check out the steps to creating a calm down corner below. It's important to teach your child how to use it and help them practice by trying it out before they need it.

Why It Helps: All children (and adults) become overwhelmed with emotion at times and need to find ways to manage those feelings. Sometimes children get upset quickly, and without skills to calm themselves down, they might lash out with an angry outburst or problem behavior. By creating a Calm Down Corner in your home, you're teaching your child how to take charge of their feelings in a positive way. This is a lifelong skill they can use and develop as they grow older. With practice, age and experience, children can get better at managing their emotions, just like any other skill they learn and practice with adult support.

Importantly, a calm down corner is not a timeout or punishment area. They are less likely to confuse it with timeout if you teach your child how to use it, give them the choice to go there when they are upset, and praise them for making a good choice. Punishing a child for getting frustrated or upset is not a long-term solution, as this doesn't address the main problem. Instead, help children learn social-emotional skills in order to recognize and control their emotions and behaviors. This is where calm down corners come in!

Steps To Creating A Calm Down Corner

1. Find a quiet location that offers some privacy, such as the back of a dining room or living room or in your child's bedroom. Involve your child in choosing a location.
2. Set up the corner so that it is peaceful, calming and comfortable. Many corners have a colored carpet or yoga mat that make up the "floor." Some have a bean bag chair, pillows or a comfortable chair for the child to sit on. Use what you have at home and ask your child to help you pick out materials and set them up.
3. Decorate the sides/walls with posters or other items that help children identify how they are feeling and pick a way to calm down. For example, you can place cards or printed pages with ideas for some deep breathing exercises that your child can do. Some excellent ready-made posters can be purchased online at: www.teacherspayteachers.com (search for calm down corner posters).
4. Add a calm down kit. This is often a small container or basket that has activities, books and sensory items that your child can use while in the corner. Some common materials include fidget toys, stress balls, scented markers, coloring books, silly putty, stuffed animals, a soft pillow or a favorite blanket. Try to use items you already have around the house. Leave this kit in the corner at all times.
5. Check in with your child after they leave the calm down corner to see how it went, how they are feeling now and what activities they chose to do while in the corner. You can give them a praise or a high five for using the corner in a positive way!



Introduce The Calm Down Corner To Your Child

After creating your calm down corner, gently introduce your child to it. Begin by explaining what a calm down corner is, what it is used for and when to use it. You can start by saying something like this:

“Have you ever heard of a Calm Down Corner? You may have something like this in one of your classrooms at school. A calm down corner is a safe place that you can go to when you are upset or you have lots of big feelings that you are having a hard time with. This is not a place you go to when you are in trouble. It is a place you go to when you need some time alone to calm down or to think about things.”

Let your child know that using the calm down corner is a choice they have when they are feeling upset. They can go there anytime on their own. Adults can also remind kids they have a choice to go to the calm down corner when they feel it will help them.

Next, go over every item in the corner together. It is a good idea to pretend to use the calm down corner in front of your child as an example and then invite them to practice. You can ask your child if there is anything else in the home he or she would like to add to their calm down corner kit, such as a favorite doll or a soft blanket.

Consider role playing a few scenarios with your child on when would be an appropriate time to use the calm down corner. You can even make this a fun game and have your child recommend situations you could use the corner as well!



One excellent resource on creating a calm down corner is:
How To Create The Perfect Calm Down Corner, by Rebecca Eanes
<https://afineparent.com/positive-parenting-faq/calm-down-corner.html>



Understanding The Pandemic – Reliable Resources

Many parents have found it challenging to find reliable information on COVID-19 and events related to the pandemic. One reason for this may be that the COVID-19 pandemic is the first pandemic where large populations have been relying on social media for information. In the past, there were a limited number of media outlets that people relied on for news. Today, there are countless ways in which people gather and share information, and most of these outlets do not fact-check the information being shared. This has resulted in a huge amount of misinformation about the pandemic being spread across the globe. Everything from false information and rumors, to outright lies, hoaxes and even conspiracy theories have been spreading faster than the virus itself. Misinformation can, at the very least, result in increased stress. On a more serious level, misinformation can put people and their families at risk of serious harm, and may even result in what could have been an avoidable loss of life.

The pandemic has been moving quickly, and information is continuously being updated by local, state, national and international authorities. To make informed decisions for your family, you will need as much accurate information as possible. But it can be difficult to sort through the mountain of information and know what is true and what is not. It is also important to not overwhelm yourself by constantly watching or reading news about the pandemic (see Reduce Media Exposure section on Page 19).

One recommended strategy is to identify and keep a list of just a few trusted resources that you can rely on for accurate information. It may be a good idea to choose one local, one national and one international news source for updates on the pandemic. Keep in mind that social media may NOT be a reliable source for news regarding the pandemic.

When looking for trusted sources, **choose ones that highlight facts** and not opinions, **feature credible experts** and witnesses (who can be verified), and have a longstanding **reputation for accuracy and fairness**. Government agencies, for example, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/>), and international agencies, like the World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/>), can provide reliable information on the virus itself, including how to protect against it, symptoms to look out for and treatments.

JOINT ACTIVITY: A True False Quiz

Let your child pretend that he or she is a teacher and you are the student. Have your child create a “quiz” to test your knowledge about COVID-19. The quiz should consist of 10 things “your child knows” about COVID-19 that are either true or false. Have your child write these down. Then, you should take the quiz and see how many you get right. This is an excellent opportunity for you to discuss COVID-19 with your child and correct any misconceptions your child may have. If you and your child are not sure about some of the answers, look them up on one of the reputable websites from your trusted resource list.





Special Assignment: Test The Adults

You are a teacher. The adults in your home are your students. You have been assigned by your principal to create a quiz about the COVID-19 pandemic. The quiz must be true-false. This means that you have to write down a statement and the person taking the quiz must decide if that statement is true or false.

Below, write down 10 things you know about COVID-19. The statements can be anything you know about the virus - like where it came from, what it looks like, how long it lasts and how it spreads from person to person. When you are finished, give the quiz to one of your students (an adult in your house) to take. Tell them they need to circle true or false next to each statement. When your student is finished, grade the quiz and see how many answers they got right. How did they do? Be sure to go over each answer with your student and explain why they got that answer right or wrong.

COVID-19 TRUE/FALSE QUIZ

- | | | |
|-----------|------|-------|
| 1. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 2. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 3. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 4. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 5. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 6. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 7. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 8. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 9. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |
| 10. _____ | TRUE | FALSE |
| _____ | | |



Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (official website)

Information on the coronavirus, how to clean and disinfect surfaces, and important health issues.

<https://www.cdc.gov>

Specific information on children and COVID-19 can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Information and resources on assisting children during the COVID-19 crisis and other disasters.

<https://www.nctsn.org>

World Health Organization

Contains up-to-date information on the current COVID-19 crisis and corrects misinformation.

https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

National Association of School Psychologists

Helpful resource center with information on COVID-19 for parents and educators.

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/family-and-educator-resources>

Child- Friendly Resources

Great information and activities for kids anywhere!

We're In This Together: Stay Home Miami from the Children's Trust

<https://www.stayhome.miami/>

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https://umiami.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_069rtUsGKr4eNKd

**"Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise."
– Victor Hugo**



**"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."
– Desmond Tutu**