



# Coping with COVID

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Family Resources to Respond to Public  
Health Crisis



**Child&Family**  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES



**PsychologicalCare**  
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A Division of Child and Family Psychological Services



*“Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength”- Mahatma Gandhi*

### How can families respond to crisis?

- Parent-child relationships have a central role in parents and children’s adjustment after stressful life events.
- Accept everything about yourself, your **current** situation, and your life without question, blame, or pushback.
- Model the behavior you want to see from your children. Your children are always watching how you respond to stress.
- Establish consistent structure and routine for children to follow to provide sense of security and safety.
- Many parents are teleworking full-time for the first time, isolated from co-workers, friends and family. Our daily living routines are disrupted causing anxiety, stress, and strain physically, mentally, and financially.
- Set boundaries on work schedules: when working from home, be sure that you are working reasonable hours. It can be tempting to work more while you are at home, however, it could also be taxing towards your mental health and well-being.
- Repetitive movements (knitting, coloring, painting, clay sculpting, and jump roping) especially left-right movement (running, drumming, skating, hopping) can help improve self-regulation in moments of distress.
- Find lightness and humor in each day. We all need a little comedic relief in our day, every day.
- Most importantly, express your unconditional love to your children, paying close, respectful attention to what they tell or show you they need from you.



## Child Responses to Stress

### Physical

- Difficulties sleeping
- Changes in eating patterns
- Headaches and stomachaches
- Fatigue

### Cognitive

- Difficulty paying attention/focusing
- Problems processing information
- New learning challenges
- Increased worry
- Forgetfulness and disorganization
- Focusing on the negative/pessimistic

### Behavioral/Social

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Poor impulse control
- Aggression/opposition
- Hyperactivity/impulsivity/restlessness
- Avoidance of activities

### Emotional

- Difficulties regulating emotions
- Low motivation
- Irritability/low frustration tolerance
- Excessive crying
- Fearfulness
- Depressed mood
- Separation anxiety

“Optimistic parents raise resilient children. Wherever there is darkness, show your child the light!”

## Helping Children Cope During Stressful Times

- Minimize media/news exposure
- Provide space to allow your child to share their perspective and ask questions
- Emphasize that your child is safe!
- Expect behavioral challenges in children and respond gently.
- Listen and validate
  - Without judgment
  - Acknowledge their feelings
  - Reflect your understanding using their language
- Engage your child in physical exercise
- Plan social calls with friends through video
- Provide your child with a healthy diet
- Rebuild trust and safety
  - Be open with your children
  - Keep your promises
  - Respond to emotional statements
  - Listen to their needs
- Help everyone find a space to retreat and relax
- Provide additional 1-on-1 time for each child
- Help your child cope through stress reduction strategies (i.e. mindfulness)
- Promote art and writing activities for self-expression

### Resources/References

[https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019?fbclid=IwAR269XEEhCpczWyMhICFjAxUEc794AXgNBzHZfMa9Q5miuzQ8nppc\\_zAi4Y](https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019?fbclid=IwAR269XEEhCpczWyMhICFjAxUEc794AXgNBzHZfMa9Q5miuzQ8nppc_zAi4Y)

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“Family: We may not have it all together but together we have it all.” *Shmuel "Shmuley" Boteach*

## Family Activities



**Mindfulness/Relaxation:** This skill helps us focus on the present moment, which improves emotional awareness and reduces stress. Techniques may include body scan, building a mindfulness box, square breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, and more.



**Arts and Crafts:** Give your child a chance to embrace their artistic side. Whether it is learning a new handcraft like crochet or getting messy with paints, your child will love exploring themselves through arts and crafts. Coming together and making a project can help us find meaning in challenging times.



**Physical Activity:** Find some time to move each day, again daily for at least thirty minutes. If you don't feel comfortable going outside, there are many YouTube videos that offer free movement classes, and if all else fails, turn on the music and have a dance party!



**Games:** Now is the time to learn how to play the keyboard, put together a huge jigsaw puzzle, start a 15 hour game of Risk, paint a picture, read the Harry Potter series, binge watch an 8-season show, crochet a blanket, solve a Rubix cube, or develop a new town in Animal Crossing. Find something that will keep you busy, distracted, and engaged to take breaks from what is going on in the outside world.



**Cooking:** Drink plenty of water, eat some good and nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something new! Cooking together increase's your family's health, it is an engaging and offline activity, and it is an excellent developmental skill for children to learn at any age!



You are doing the best you can! Resilience is the ability to bounce back from a negative experience or difficult challenge.

Connecting with others through empathy and understanding can remind you that you're not alone in the midst of difficulties.

Develop some realistic goals and do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward the things you want to accomplish.

This is our present day reality but not our future!

An optimistic outlook empowers you to expect that good things will happen to you!

***If things become too distressing, we are here to help! You are not alone on this journey! CFPS has been providing telehealth since 2016. Our clinicians are available to provide services by videoconferencing.***



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781-551-0999 [www.cfpsych.org](http://www.cfpsych.org)



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