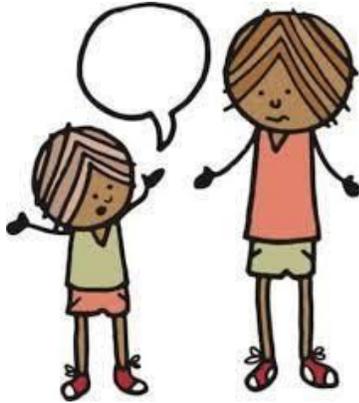


Self-Care for Parents and Caregivers



- **Slow down** and take a few deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Use the “ha” sound as you breathe out. This helps to calm our nervous system.
 - **Notice how you are feeling.** Be aware of how you are feeling in your body right now. Are you feeling anxious, scared, stressed, or afraid? Numbed out or on autopilot? Do you have racing or negative thoughts? Acknowledge it all without trying to fix or change it.
 - **Remind yourself** that you, your family, your elders, your ancestors, and your community have overcome hardships in the past.
-
- **Remember your own sources of inner wisdom, strength, and resilience.**
 - **Know that you are important to your children and their wellbeing** during this time of great uncertainty.
 - **You are doing the best that you can right now under challenging circumstances.**
 - **None of us are parenting perfectly.** You may not always respond to your children in the ways you might want to when feeling stressed, scared, or frustrated. When that happens, you can apologize. Then listen to your child’s response without defending yourself or making excuses. After a while, both of you might be ready to reconnect through a hug or smile and then move on to what’s next.
 - **Remember** that resting, drinking water, and moving help you too!
 - **Connect with friends and trusted adults in your life** to talk, share a laugh, and get the support you need to continue coping with all of the added stress right now.
 - **Find some inner calm.** Here are some resources from Truman Medical Centers’ Center for Trauma-Informed Innovation that parents and caregivers might find useful:
 - Virtual Room of Refuge: <https://mailchi.mp/751f8d07b5db/virtualroomofrefuge>

Talking with Children about COVID-19

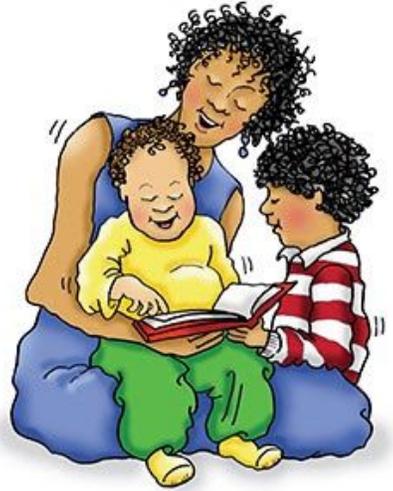


- **Help children feel reassured and protected.** Support your children by having conversations that are sensitive to their age and what they can understand.
 - **Children may be telling us through their behavior how they are feeling.** They may feel more irritable, frustrated, scared, and unhappy right now. It is totally normal for us to feel more stressed by all of this. It can be helpful to allow yourself to pause, take a breath, and ask yourself what your child might need at this moment.
 - **Invite children to ask questions, knowing that there is still so much that is unclear.** Your calm and receptive attention can go a long way in helping children adjust to the uncertainty.
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- **Dealing with fears:** Children might experience more fears and worries right now and might have trouble with transitions (like separating from you, going to bed at night, and adjusting to new routines). Try not to get discouraged if your usual ways of soothing and comforting your children don't seem to be working. Think about what your children might need right now. It could be that extra cuddle time, attention, and being physically close to you will help.
 - **Be extra gentle and forgiving with your children by modeling kindness and care.** Forgive yourself too!
 - **Here's a video with a read aloud story for young children:**
 - Time to Come in Bear: A Children's Story About Social Distancing:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DA_SsZFYw0w
 - **These e-books can help explain COVID-19 to your children:**
 - For children under age 7, downloadable as a PDF in many languages: #COVIBOOK <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
 - For children age 6 and older, downloadable in English and Spanish: <https://akidsbookabout.com/products/a-kids-book-about-covid-19>



Staying Healthy

- **Helping our children and ourselves stay healthy may be extra challenging right now while we pay attention to our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.**
- **Children and adults might feel lonely and miss contact with loved ones, friends, and others in the community.**
- **Find creative ways to engage with each other to maintain these important relationships while apart.** Share activities with friends and relatives, such as playing games online, sending silly videos, or talking on the phone. Children and their relatives may enjoy sharing stories and reading to each other. This can help bridge the sense of distance between us.
- **Don't feel guilty about increased screen time for your children right now.** Try to find a balance between screen time and doing other activities together that are fun and joyful.
- **Adults might also consider taking a "news break."** Our hopes and fears may rise and fall depending on what we are reading and hearing about COVID-19.
- **Helping others feels good and keeps us connected with the world.** Get creative and ask your children for ideas, like making a card for a relative or drawing a poster for a neighbor or other caring person in your community.
- **Showing children ways to stay healthy and protect themselves and others can be empowering.** Here are some fun hand washing videos that you can share with young children:
 - PBS Kids with Daniel the Tiger:
<https://pbskids.org/video/daniel-tigers-neighborhood/2365375359>
 - Sesame Street with Elmo:
<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/health/?activity=handwashing>
- **Children of all ages may benefit from doing activities with you that can be relaxing and fun:**
 - **Join Elmo and Common in Belly Breathing:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mZbzDOpylA
 - **Take 2 minutes to get up and "shake it out."** Shake your body all over: hands, wrists, arms, chest, hips, legs, ankles, head and neck, feet and toes. If you like, put on music.
 - **Draw a peaceful place.** Invite children to draw a real or imaginary place that makes them feel calm and at ease. Help them think about details (like a cozy blanket, seeing the stars). Ask children to tell you about their drawing. You can put it in a handy spot and let them know that they can also go to this place in their mind when they feel stressed.



Maintaining Routines

- **Children and adults benefit from having routines**, especially in times of stress, because so much is unpredictable. Setting routines for you and your family can help create a sense of emotional safety and calm. Children will know what to expect and what's going to happen when.
- **Help children transition to being “at home” and not in school and day care by creating routines that work for your family.** You might consider making a schedule that is flexible but has built in routines around waking up, planning your day, quiet time, family time, indoor and outdoor play, learning, mealtimes, and going to sleep at night. Think about what has worked in the past and what you might need to do now to help children and teens feel more reassured during this time.
- **Help children make transitions between activities.** Let children know how much time is left for watching TV or playing games before starting something new.
- **Pay attention to pacing and variety throughout the day.** Quiet time (reading or watching a show) can be followed by more active family time.
- **Find things to do together.** Have a dance party, go outside for a walk, make a snack and eat together. This can be spontaneous or planned at the start of the day. Whenever possible, follow your child's lead and ideas.
- **Tune into your own energy level and what you can handle in the moment, so you can truly connect, be present for your child, and have fun!** Otherwise, your children will realize you're distracted and your heart isn't in it.
- **For parents working remotely at home:** Consider creating new routines to help balance work time and caregiving time with “me” time. It's not “business as usual,” so take frequent breaks.
- **For parents working outside the home:**
 - **Children may need extra support around managing drop offs, pick ups, and separations.** Younger children may like to have a reminder of you while you are apart (a love note, a small object they can hold or take out of a pocket during the day that lets them know you are with them though apart). These transitions might be difficult and even scary for you and your children.
 - **During reunions, give yourself time to breathe and pause, before jumping right into childcare responsibilities.** Find out how their day was, what went well, and what might have been hard. You know your children best. Some children will want to talk about their feelings right away, while others might need quiet downtime, reading a story with you, cuddling, or being more active, like jumping and running around.
- **Here's a resource from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network that you might find helpful:**
 - <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>





Playing

- **Children of all ages may miss being with their friends and family.** It's important to play both indoors and outside. Teens may find ways to be social while maintaining physical distance.
- **Do activities that you and your children enjoy.** Make a plan together with your children to do old favorites or try something new, if that feels right.
- **Here are some ideas for inside and outside play:**
 - **Inside:** Singing, dancing, drawing, coloring, building with blocks, playing with clay, playing cards and board games, and putting together puzzles. Be creative and make music using “instruments” made from kitchen pots and spoons. Build a blanket fort under a table. From your window, play “I spy”—look for birds, count other windows in the neighborhood, and identify colors. Add to this list with ideas that your children and family enjoy!
 - **Outside:** Go on a nature hike or scavenger hunt; play tag, red light/green light, follow the leader (let your child lead too). Play catch or make up games with balls like hot potato/cold potato. On a sidewalk or driveway, draw with chalk. What can your family add to this list?
- **Find a green space close to home for “forest breathing” and other meditation activities or do yoga together** (inside or outside) with these printable cards: <https://www.solandlunayoga.com/>

Learning

- **Stay connected to children’s schools and teachers.** See if the school provides learning packets or other resources to help with learning at home.
- **Build fun into the learning experience** and praise your child for what they explore and achieve. Reinforce learning through “show and tell” time.
- **Parents may fear that their children will fall behind during this time.** Try not to worry too much about getting everything right and completing every assignment.
- **Reading together** is an opportunity for closeness and learning for all ages.
- **Here are some helpful links for schooling at home:**
 - Wide Open School: <https://wideopenschool.org/>
 - PBS Kids: <https://www.pbs.org/parents>

