

# Supporting Mental Well-being during COVID-19

UPDATED 03/23/2020

## Everyone

As things progress with COVID-19 prevention efforts, you or your loved ones may be experiencing increased stress and anxiety. Consider the following tips to support your mental well-being during these uncertain times. It is important to be gentle with yourself and others, and to take steps to support both your own and your family's mental well-being.

### TIPS TO REDUCE COVID-19 ANXIETY

-  Focus on what you can control – including your thoughts, behaviors.
-  Remember that you are resilient, and so is humankind. We will get through this.
-  Do what you can to reduce your risk; take comfort that you are caring for yourself and others.
-  Use technology to connect with others frequently.
-  Look for the good stuff: the helpers, time with family, and opportunities to pull together. Write down three things you are grateful for each day.
-  Limit exposure to news or social media updates.
-  Use reputable sources of news, avoid speculation and rumors.
-  Model peaceful behavior for those around you. Remember everyone experience stress differently.
-  Don't let fear influence your decisions, such as hoarding supplies.
-  Be gentle with yourself and others.
-  Create a regular routine, especially for children and work from home.
-  Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routines to help your immune system and mental health.
-  Spend time in nature while adhering to social distancing guidelines.
-  Reflect on your reactions. Many who have experienced trauma may be triggered by feelings of powerlessness. Understanding what you are feeling can help you consider how you want to respond to the triggers.
-  Practice meditation, yoga, or other mind-body techniques. Find apps or online videos to help.
-  Reach out if you need to talk. There are local and national hotlines and warmlines that can help!

#### Tips to Reduce COVID-19 Anxiety

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/mentalhealth/covidavoidanxiety.pdf>)

## Staying Connected

Tips to remain connected while practicing social distancing or in quarantine:

- Use technology to stay in touch if available, especially video contact. Seeing someone's facial expressions can help increase connection.
- Speak to neighbors from a distance, over a fence or across balconies.
- Check in with your friends, family, and neighbors regularly.
- Wherever you can, assist people in your life who may be more vulnerable (e.g. those with no access to the internet or need help grocery shopping)
- Connect with the people in your household. Use this time to improve your existing relationships!
- Manage your stress. Create a daily self-care routine. Exercise, meditate, and keep to a daily routine as much as possible.
- Show kindness to others in your community. This is very stressful for many people, especially those who are vulnerable and families who may be struggling already with poverty or other family stressors. It is also very stressful for health care workers and their families. Helping others also increase your sense of purpose and value, improving your own well-being. It's not just family and friends who require support, but others in your community.

## Other Resources

- [CDC Manage Anxiety & Stress \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html)
- [MDH Everyday Tools and Tips for Mental Well-being \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/mentalhealth/quickcardmwb.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/mentalhealth/quickcardmwb.pdf)
- [SAMHSA Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health \(https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf)

## Hotlines

If you are experiencing emotional distress or a mental health crisis please reach out to any of the following resources.

- SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)
  - TTY: 1-800-846-8517
  - Text: TalkWithUs to 66746 SMS (español): "Hablanos" al 66746

- [Disaster Distress Hotline \(https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline)
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line Text “MN” to 741741
- Minnesota Mobile Mental Health Crisis Line Call: \*\*CRISIS (\*\*274747). For landlines, see the directory for mental health crisis phone numbers in Minnesota by county.

## Children and Parents

### Helping children during COVID-19

#### Talk with Children about COVID-19

As news about the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues, children may have questions for parents and caregivers about the disease. Especially as normal routines change, children may display signs of worry about themselves, their families and their friends. Certain words and practices can help children cope with their feelings and help guide discussions. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has put together a resource document to help parents and caregivers talk with their children about COVID-19.

#### Stay Calm

Children react to what you say and how you say it. They “absorb” what is said to others and pick up on nonverbal body language. The calmer you seem, the more relaxed your child will be, which helps children better understand what they are told. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has put together a list of words and actions that can help parents and caregivers discuss COVID-19 with their children.

#### Make time to listen to your children

When children are worried, it is important to make time to talk with them. They need to know they can express their feelings and ask questions, and that you can take the time to answer their questions.

#### Be aware of what your children see and hear on television, the radio and online.

Children see and hear more than we as parents and caregivers are aware. It is important to know what your child has seen or heard about COVID-19 so that you can discuss any worries or misinformation.

## Learn what your child already knows

Children are curious by nature. Following your children's lead by responding to questions they ask helps them have the age-appropriate information that they need to help keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as appropriately informed. If your child asks about something that you do not know, rely upon the CDC's information to answer the question in an age-appropriate way. Be honest, but be reassuring.

## Tell your children that most kids with COVID-19 do not get very sick, but we can help those who could

Explain to your child that most people with COVID-19 have cold-like symptoms. Explain that some people, however, can get very sick. Some kids with chronic health conditions and older people are some of these people. Explain that we can all help by washing our hands frequently and staying home right now to help stop the virus from spreading. Letting children know this information can help them feel like they have some control and worry less.

## Maintain or Implement Routines

- Maintaining routine is important for children, especially when there is increased uncertainty and stress. As school and home routines are disrupted, children may have trouble regulating their emotions and behaviors. Maintain basic daily routines as you normally would, such as getting ready for the day and bedtime schedules. If you have school-age children, create a basic loose structure for the day and week. Consider the following tips:
  - Have a goal or theme for the week, like a camp!
  - Utilize any educational resources that your school provides for a portion of each day; the amount of time may vary depending on the age of your child.
  - Spend some time outside each day for exercise and fresh air.
  - Include time for fun and relaxation too.
- [Survive and thrive with your young children \(Ages 4-10\) at home \(https://medium.com/@zeynep.isik02/survive-and-thrive-with-your-young-children-ages-4-10-at-home-fea2df7c97f7\)](https://medium.com/@zeynep.isik02/survive-and-thrive-with-your-young-children-ages-4-10-at-home-fea2df7c97f7)
- [Tools and Resources for Remote Instruction Curated by the New Jersey Association of School Librarians \(https://wakelet.com/wake/118169c2-0557-47af-bc6b-0ed4dda85ccb\)](https://wakelet.com/wake/118169c2-0557-47af-bc6b-0ed4dda85ccb)

## Keep Children Busy

See these resources for children's activities:

- [Simple Activities for Children and Adolescents \(https://www.nctsn.org/resources/simple-activities-children-and-adolescents\)](https://www.nctsn.org/resources/simple-activities-children-and-adolescents)
- [NASA Kids' Club \(http://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/index.html\)](http://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/index.html)  
*Downloads, videos and science related activity ideas for all ages.*
- [Fun Stuff for Kids Online \(https://www.si.edu/kids\)](https://www.si.edu/kids)  
*Smithsonian - animal webcams, activity sheets and interactive games*
- [101 Activities to do with Toddlers & Preschoolers at Home \(https://www.paperpinecone.com/blog/101-activities-do-home-toddlers-preschoolers\)](https://www.paperpinecone.com/blog/101-activities-do-home-toddlers-preschoolers)
- [Storyline Online \(https://www.storylineonline.net/\)](https://www.storylineonline.net/)  
*Children's Literacy site, includes videos with individuals reading children's books*
- [Bedtime Math \(http://bedtimemath.org/fun-math-at-home/\)](http://bedtimemath.org/fun-math-at-home/)  
*Keep you kids math skills sharp*
- [Great Minds: Knowledge on the Go \(https://gm.greatminds.org/en-us/knowledgeonthego\)](https://gm.greatminds.org/en-us/knowledgeonthego)  
*Resources for math, English language arts, and science*
- [BrainPOP: Coronavirus \(https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/\)](https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/)  
*Free animated online lesson for kids about coronavirus*
- [BreakoutEDU: Fun @ Home \(https://www.breakoutedu.com/funathome\)](https://www.breakoutedu.com/funathome)  
*A collection of digital games*
- [Conjuguemos \(https://legacy.conjuguemos.com/\)](https://legacy.conjuguemos.com/)  
*Teaches language through fun activities and games*
- [Khan Academy \(https://www.khanacademy.org/\)](https://www.khanacademy.org/)  
*Free courses for all grade levels*
- [PBS Learning Media \(https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/\)](https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/)  
*Free lesson plans, videos, and games*
- [TEDEd \(https://ed.ted.com/\)](https://ed.ted.com/)  
*Brings lessons to life for students through animation*
- [Duolingo \(https://www.duolingo.com/\)](https://www.duolingo.com/)  
*Tools for foreign language skills*

### **Other Resources for Parents**

- [MDH Mental Well-being for Kids \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/mentalhealth/quickcardkids.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/mentalhealth/quickcardkids.pdf)

- [CDC Tips for talking with children about Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html)  
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>)
- [Child Mind Tips for talking with kids about the Coronavirus](https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/)  
(<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>)
- [Kidpower: Helping Children Regain Their Emotional Safety after a Tragedy](https://kidpowercs.org/helping-children-regain-their-emotional-safety-after-a-tragedy/)  
(<https://kidpowercs.org/helping-children-regain-their-emotional-safety-after-a-tragedy/>)