



COVID 19: well-being of you and your children

The following tips will help you to reduce the stress and anxiety of you and your children in light of the COVID-19 global outbreak. These are tips for you as a parent, but they can also be used by older children who take care of children or by other caregivers of children.

Why your well-being is important

Stress, fear and anxiety affects people in many ways and can cause you to feel both physically and mentally drained. It is essential to stay well during these times. Please see a list below outlining why your well-being as a parent is so important.

- You will be better able to think clearly and make decisions
- You will be better able to cope
- You will be more patient with the situation and your children who may show frustration, anger, sadness, etc.
- You will be able to understand the feelings and behavior of your children better
- Staying well helps your body to be strong
- Children up to 12 years old make sense of the outside world by the way that you react to that outside world. Their well-being is directly linked with your well-being. They mirror your actions and stress responses.

Tips for your emotional well being

There are many ways that you can stay well during these difficult times. Please see a list of tips below. If you previously engaged in a relaxing ritual or activity that you can do at home, try and keep it in your daily routine.

- Get enough rest, but do not spend more time in bed than you usually would, stick to your regular sleep schedule.
- Take time for yourself every day, even if it's five minutes
- Talk with friends or neighbors; if you are unable to leave the house, you can call or text them.
- Do not search continuously for news. Instead, keep yourself informed by searching for news at a dedicated time once a day.
- Try to distinguish facts from rumors.
- Ensure that you have some movement every day, even if you cannot leave the place where you live.
- Once you follow all guidelines regarding hygiene and contacts with others, take pride in yourself that you are doing everything that you can do to protect yourself and your family.
- Accept that you are human. Feelings of anxiety, fear and/or anger are normal. Once you recognize these feelings, try to think about beautiful things, try to talk more softly and slowly and breath normally.

Tips for helping children feel well:

Tips all ages:

- Children need to see that not everything in their life has changed. As much as possible, stick to the routine of eating times, cleaning times, playing times and sleeping times.
- Use the tips for activities that are also included in this package.
- As much as possible, support your children to continue learning and playing even though they are out of school.

Tips per age group:

0 – 3 years old

- Children are sensitive to your emotional presence and physical closeness. Try as much as possible to address them in the same way as you did before, even if they are babies.
- Around the age of two, children often use the word 'no'. Accept this as normal behavior

3- 6 years old

- Remind your child that you are there to take good care of them.
- Some children might lose abilities that they acquired before, e.g. they might start bedwetting, this is a normal response to stress.
- Children in this age explore things and like to be busy. Do not limit this but ensure this is done in the place where you live if this is required by the authorities.

6- 11 years old

- Children in this age group can have nightmares and fears about losing parents, grandparents, or other people who are close to them. Respond that you understand the feelings, and normalize the feelings, 'if you think that grandma is in danger, that is scary...'
- Ask your child what they are thinking and/ or afraid of (especially younger children may have made their explanations and perceptions that can be much more frightening than reality).
- Let the children speak and allow them to express what they fear. you can use phrases such as "some children fear that..."
- Talk to children about the facts, do not exaggerate, but be honest and do not make false promises.
- Inform children why we have the "stay at home policy"- it is to prevent- not because it is dangerous to go outside.
- Remind your child that you are there to take good care of them.
- Encourage your child that this situation will not be forever (but again do not give false promises).
- Do not keep news media on the whole day.
- Avoid talking about the number of seriously ill people or deceased.

12 years and older

- Children in this age group are likely to explore the existing information themselves. Yet, they might not have the ability to distinguish facts from rumors. They might confront you with messages that can provoke panic. Stay calm and help them understand the reality.
- Children might have outbursts of anger. This response is, in general, a characteristic of this age group, but in times of increased stress, fear and uncertainty, there might be more outbursts.
- Children in this age group depend emotionally on their friends who are of the same age. Accept that your child goes through a difficult time in case these contacts are restricted. Yet, do not allow for exceptions on restrictions.
- Children in this age group often isolate themselves when they are at home. It is normal in this stage of their development.
- Children in this age group need facts. They are very sensitive and know quickly when you are hiding the truth or keeping information from them. This will cause them not to trust you or see you as a source for valid information.

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