



Creating a Family Plan:

Responding to Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19

How to Help Your Children

This is a stressful time for many families. Each of your family members, including your children, has likely had many changes to their daily routines in recent weeks or months. This can be upsetting to children and disruptive to the family.

The good news is that there are many things you can do as a parent or caregiver to help children adjust to these changes.

Children's emotional and social needs

From a very early age, children learn how to relate to people. They typically have fun interacting with people of all ages. Over time, most children rely on these interactions for entertainment and self-esteem support.

When your children lose the social interactions they usually have at school or in the neighborhood, it is a big change. They may feel insecure and sad. They may be irritable. They likely feel like they've lost their usual freedom. And they may not like being at home for a long time with the family. **All of this change is happening to children who are still learning how to manage their feelings and thoughts.**

Children may not have a job or bills to worry about, but these are tough times for them too. Their sense of loss is very real. This is an opportunity for all members of the family to be kind and compassionate toward each other.

How much should you tell your children?

Every member of your family is unique. Some adults may want a lot of information, but teenagers may want only highlights. Some children are deep thinkers and worriers. Other children typically may not worry, but this topic may spark their curiosity.

When you talk to your children, give **factual information**. And consider each person's needs and personality as you decide **how much information** to share.

The Value of a Daily Routine

Routines are important for children of all ages and for most adults. Crisis situations and separation from other people will break a family's routines. Now you have an opportunity to create new routines. When children have a routine, it helps them feel safe and secure. You can add fun activities for the family to do together too. See also "Example of a Daily Schedule."

These suggestions may be helpful for every member of your family.

- Try to keep the usual bedtimes and wake times that you'd typically have at this time of year. If possible, get a bit more sleep than you may have when your days were busier.
- Eat as a family as often as possible. Follow a routine for mealtimes too.
- Schedule time for electronics — for fun, for schoolwork and for your job if applicable.
- Think about trying new hobbies that the children are interested in.
- Set a daily time to be with your children.
 - Play games.
 - Exercise, walk or do a physical activity, such as cleaning the basement or caring for the yard. Even at home, inside or outside, children can find ways to be active. They can play tag, kickball or basketball. They can make and run an obstacle course, ride a bike or walk the dog. Other options include doing the hula hoop, situps and pushups.
 - Read to or with your children.
 - Play musical instruments and sing songs together.



Family meetings

During a crisis, people go through various stages of grief. Even members of the same family will process grief differently. Your children need to know this is normal. It's OK to feel sad, angry, disappointed, and so on.

One of your goals is to maintain or build your connection with your children. When children know that you are present and engaged in their lives, they can cope better with the stress and changes around them.

One way to reach out is to have family chats, or meetings. Regardless of how the day is going, take a few minutes in the morning and evening for this. These chats don't have to be any longer than 5 or 10 minutes. The timing depends on how many people are in your family and how engaged people are in the conversation.

Consider these suggestions:

- Talk about the day's planned events. Ask about each child's plans for the day.
- Give the children genuine feedback or praise for how they handled a recent situation or event.
- Talk about how to handle a concern or frustration.
- Tell the family whether you need time to work that day. This may be especially important if you need a quiet place to focus or to have a conference call.
- Talk about how you can help other people during this difficult time. For example, you could have an online chat with grandparents, text or email to check in on other friends, and call neighbors who are new parents.
- Ask your family members how their day went and how they are doing overall. You could ask each person to rate the day on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being a fantastic day. If the scores are in the middle or low, ask what the family or child could do to make the scores better.

Limit access to the news

The global and regional impact of COVID-19 changes every day. It may be tempting to have the TV or radio on during the day. Unless you listen using ear buds, consider turning the news off when children are around.

If you know your children overheard something in the news, or they overheard you talking on the phone, ask them what they heard. Ask if it worries them. Go back to the basics: Children of all ages need to feel safe. Explain to your child that there is a virus that makes people sick. But your family is doing everything you can to be healthy.



Suggestions for Making a School and Work Schedule

If your children's schools are closed, they likely are offering online learning. Many schools are using email and apps to update families about lesson plans and homework.

- Be sure the schools know how to get in touch with your children and you.
- Ask your children to manage their emails, apps and assignments if you believe they are able to do this.
- Work with younger children to ensure that their homework is completed and turned in.
- Ask your children to record their assignments somewhere. This may be on paper or in an online document.
- Check up on the assignments once in a while. Stressful times can lead to distress and procrastination for people of all ages.
- Check-in with your college-age children. Ask how you can help them transition to online classes.

While your children are in school at home, you may need to work from home as well.

- Do you have enough computers or other electronic devices to give each person access? If not, tell the school. They may have devices that you can borrow.
- Do you have enough space for each person to have privacy or quiet while they work? Ideally, you want to have spaces that are dedicated for school or work tasks. But that may not be possible if you have a few family members at home. In that case, find a bag or box each person can use to keep their items organized.
- Create a schedule that allows time and electronic access for your own work. You may have to be more flexible than usual as you balance a new family routine. For example, typically you may not work at 8 p.m. But if this is when you have a computer and quiet, you may need to do an hour or two of work after the children are in bed.
- If needed, talk to your supervisor to get permission to work a flexible schedule.

Be kind to yourself and your children

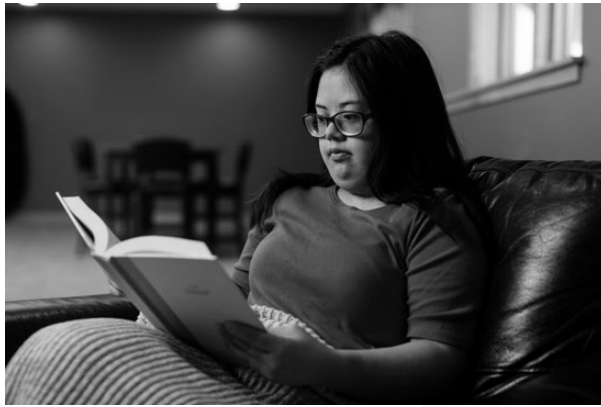
This is a difficult time. It's OK, for example, if you give the children more play time while you answer work emails or do household chores.

Note: If you have young children at home, make sure you address all their needs right before you get on an important conference call. Give them hugs and kisses. And praise them for their ability to play by themselves. For example, say, "I love it when you are able to play all by yourself, like a big boy (or girl)!"

A note about teens

Teenagers likely will want to create their own schedule. But you should talk the them about it. Make sure each day includes the following:

- Schoolwork
- Exercise
- Regular meals
- Social connections
- Fun activities/relaxation
- Time with family



Example of a Daily Schedule

This example includes information for adults and preschool and school-age children. Revise this as needed to suit the activities and needs of each of your family members.

6:30-7:30 a.m.	Wake up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get dressed. • Use the bathroom; WASH HANDS. • Eat breakfast; clear dishes afterward. • WASH HANDS; brush teeth.
7:30-8:00 a.m.	TV time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger children watch a TV show. • Older children do schoolwork. • Adults check on work or house chores.
8:00-9:00 a.m.	Free play	Play outside or in the bedroom.
9:00-10:00 a.m.	Morning walk	Put on coat and shoes.
10:00-11:30 a.m.	Work cycle 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do activity books, puzzle or arts and crafts, or read. – Practice or play a musical instrument. – Play with blocks, playdough, stuffed animals, or toys. • Older children do schoolwork. • Adults check on work or house chores or take time for self-care.
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults prepare lunch; engage children to help as much as possible. • WASH HANDS before eating. • Eat lunch; clear dishes after lunch. • WASH HANDS.
12:30-1:00 p.m.	Get ready for quiet time	Go to the bathroom; WASH HANDS.
1:00-3:00 p.m.	Quiet time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger children entertain themselves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nap. – Read quietly in room. – Do puzzles, draw or color. • Older children do schoolwork. • Adults check on work or house chores or take time for self-care.

3:00-3:30 p.m.	Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WASH HANDS before eating. • Eat snack; clear dishes afterward. • WASH HANDS after snack.
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Work cycle 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger children entertain themselves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do activity books, puzzle or arts and crafts, or read. – Practice or play a musical instrument. – Play with blocks, playdough, stuffed animals, or toys. • Older children do schoolwork. • Adults check on work or house chores or take time for self-care.
4:30-5:30 p.m.	TV time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger children watch a TV show. • Older children do schoolwork. • Adults check on work, take time for self-care or prepare dinner.
5:30-6:30 p.m.	Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults prepare dinner and engage children to help as much as possible. • WASH HANDS before eating. • Eat dinner; clear dishes afterward. • WASH HANDS after dinner.
6:30-7:30 p.m.	Quiet time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play in bedroom. • Go to the bathroom; WASH HANDS. • Get clothes ready for tomorrow. • Adults check on work or house chores or take time for self-care.
7:30-8:30 p.m.	Bedtime	<p>Younger children and school-age children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal bedtime routine: Go to bathroom; bathe; WASH HANDS; brush teeth. • Electronics off. Relax, read a book, etc.
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Work cycle 3 (if needed)	Adults have time to work, check on house chores or relax.
9:30-10:30 p.m.	Quiet time	Adults check on house chores or relax.
10:30-11:30 p.m.	Bedtime	<p>Older children and adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal bedtime routine: Go to bathroom; bathe; WASH HANDS; brush teeth. • Electronics off. Relax, read a book, etc.

The Benefits of Maintaining Social Connections

You may be practicing social distancing, also called physical distancing, in your community. You keep a six-foot physical separation when you are around other people. Fortunately, a physical separation doesn't have to impact your emotional or social connections. Especially in these times, staying in touch is encouraged for every member of the family.

Throughout the week, schedule calls with your support network, such as family, friends and coworkers. Take advantage of technology apps, such as FaceTime™, WhatsApp™, Skype™, Zoom™, and others.

Preschool-age children

Young children may find it confusing when you use apps to visit with family and friends. Introduce the technology. Stay nearby while they talk. You may need to help them understand the conversation. You can schedule a virtual play date too. Children can play with their toys while you manage the device. Your family or friends can ask questions or comment on the children's activities.

School-age children

Children in this age group often rely on physical connections, such as those at school or in extracurricular groups. If they don't have those group events, they lose connection with those supportive relationships. You likely will have to initiate electronic connections. Also, consider your need to supervise the calls. Think, too, about your need to supervise their social media use. This may be especially important if social media is fairly new to them.

Encourage your children to talk to their friends on the phone or have video chats. Hearing each other's voices and seeing their faces is a closer connection than texts and instant messages.

Teenagers

Peer groups and socialization are very important for most teens. They typically turn to peers for emotional support rather than to family members. When teens can't connect in person with their peers, they lose the connections that support or enhance those relationships. Understandably, teens have a hard time with this. Your teenagers may worry about their peer groups separating. Or they may worry that things will be different when they return to normal routines.

Encourage your teens to continue to communicate electronically with their friends. Encourage phone calls and video chats. It is important for teens to maintain those connections during this stressful time.



Experiencing loss and grief

Teenagers are dealing with many losses during this pandemic. They may miss the routine of the school day and seeing their friends and teachers. They may not get to play the instruments or sports they love. They may miss music performances and sports competitions or games. They may miss prom and other social events. Some teens won't have a traditional graduation ceremony and the family celebration afterward.

Each of these losses can lead a teen to feel down and possibly hopeless about the future. As a parent, it is important for you to encourage open communication about these losses and the related grief. Respect and validate your teen's feelings. At the same time, work to create ways for teens to safely celebrate special events. For example, friends could dress up and have a virtual prom. Seniors could put on their graduation gowns and have a virtual graduation party.

Suggestions for Managing Stress

Preschool and school-age children

Young children may not be able to identify their stress. But they may act sad, anxious, irritated, or angry. Their grades and homework may not be as good. They may act out in situations that typically wouldn't bother them. These are all common signs of stress for children.

Remind your children:

- You are available if they want to talk about how they are feeling. Drawing is a good way to express themselves too.
- They may feel better when they are as healthy as they can be. Help them get good sleep, hydrate well and eat healthy.
- They need to move every day. It can help them have more energy, sleep better, grow better, and be at a healthy weight. It also helps them have better balance and hand-eye coordination and have a better-working brain.

School-age children and teens

These children may not be able to avoid the stress brought on by this virus. But they can learn ways to deal with it. Stress doesn't have to take over their lives. Here are some strategies you can suggest.

- If they feel stressed, what about this situation makes them feel stressed? Suggest that they write about it. Writing can help them clear stress or anxiety from their minds.
- They can make a plan to manage their stress. Writing about activities they can do can unlock their stress. Break the plan up into reasonable steps.

When you talk to your children, here are some messages you can share:

- *Try to be present with your family. When you are with us, please put the cell phone and other devices away so you can focus on us.*
- *If you feel sad, anxious or angry, that's normal. When it happens, journal, do some exercises, go for a run, focus on your breathing, think about who you could help, and so on.*
- *Have a sense of humor. Laughter is good for you physically and mentally.*
- *Make time to relax. Read, jog, meditate. Do relaxed breathing.*
- *Make time to be active. Get 30 minutes of continuous physical activity every day. Move at least an hour or more a day. Walking is a great option!*
- *Eat healthy and hydrate well.*
- *Get at least 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of continuous sleep at night.*

Self-Care Strategies for Parents

Make time for yourself

It's easy to focus on everyone else. But it's important to take care of your needs too. When you keep your stress as low as you can, you'll feel better. And you may be better prepared to help your family reduce their stresses.

- Talk to your friends and family in a private space. This allows you to speak freely. And that may help you reduce your stress.
- Identify any support you need and reach out to get it. This may be emotional or physical help. It may come from family and friends. Or it may be help from resources in your community.
- Schedule enjoyable activities for yourself. It could be something simple like cuddling with a pet or doing relaxed breathing.
- Plan something to do with a partner, such as a puzzle, walk or board game.
- Sit with your partner or older children, enjoy a cup of tea or cocoa together. Try to talk about something other than COVID-19.



These Are Unusual Times

You likely are having a number of new conversations with your children. And there are a lot of changes to make as your family adjusts to being at home together. Yet in the midst of this, for many families, there are some positive outcomes too.

More time at home together means more time for family activities. More time for reading, cooking and baking. More time for puzzles, board games and Twister™. More time for family walks with the dog, biking and dance parties in the family room. And for some kids, this may be the perfect time to try to teach a parent how to play chess.

All of these activities give you opportunities to deepen your family relationships. This is time to help your children feel as safe, secure and loved as possible.

In summary:

- Live one day or one moment at a time.
- Remember, you don't have to have all of the answers. It's OK to say, "I don't know. But I'll find out, and I'll tell you as soon as I can."
- Know who's on your personal support team. Who can you call when you are worried or you just need to vent? Use your support team. If you are able, return that kindness when they need help.
- **Model good self-care!** Make a plan about how you want to manage your stress and your life. Take care of yourself. Try new relaxation skills. Involve your children when possible.
- Eat and drink healthy. Avoid using alcohol or other drugs as a way to reduce stress.
- Be aware of your emotions. Express your emotions and your thoughts in healthy ways.
- Don't dwell on the negatives. Be factual when the children ask for information. But carefully choose how much information to tell each member of your family.
- If you feel overwhelmed, take a minute before you respond to your children.
- **Whatever you do to be safe and present with your family will help them.**

See also "Communicating with Children"

If you notice reactions or behaviors in your children that worry you, review these age-specific examples. They offer suggestions about how to talk to children.

Communicating with Preschool-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>Helplessness: Young children look to their parents or caregivers to keep them safe. In a crisis, they may feel helpless or overwhelmed. If they feel helpless or overwhelmed, they may become unusually quiet or agitated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comfort, rest, food, water, and opportunities for play and drawing. • Help them use play or drawing about the crisis to turn it into something positive. It's OK for children to refer to illness or hospitals when they play, draw or talk. If they seem upset, help them include something that could make them feel safer or better. • Reassure your children that you and other grown-ups are working to protect them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your children more hugs, hand holding or time sitting in your lap. • Make sure there is a special safe area for your children to play with supervision. • Example: In play, a 4-year-old child keeps having dolls get sick and go to the hospital. You can ask, "What can you do to help your dolls be as healthy as possible?" The child could cover the doll's mouth and nose with tape or cotton and then say, "He can breathe better now. He can't get sick now." You might respond with, "That was a good idea. We all have to do some things to help keep us healthy."

Communicating with Preschool-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>General fearfulness: After a crisis like this, young children may become afraid of being separated from their parents. They may not want to be alone, even in the bathroom or when trying to fall asleep.</p> <p>Children want to believe that their parents can protect them in all situations. And they want to believe that other adults, such as health care providers, ambulance crews and police officers, can help them too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect and validate your children's fears or worries. It's normal for them to worry. Be as calm as you can when you talk to them. • Help children regain confidence that you don't plan to leave them. And you are doing all you can to protect them. • Remind them that there are people working to keep families safe, and that your family can get help if you need to. • Give your children ways to communicate their fears to you. • If you are working outside of the home at this time, remind your children why it's important for you to go to work. Tell them when you will return home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of conversations you have over the phone. Can the children hear you? • Say things such as, "I believe we are safe here at home. People are working hard to help us be safe." • Say, "If you feel scared, come and tell me about it. We can talk about it so you'll feel better."
<p>Confusion about when the danger will be over: Young children can overhear things from adults and older children. They can see things on TV. Or they can just imagine that the virus is never going to end. They may believe the danger is close to home, even if no one in your town has been diagnosed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give simple, repeated explanations as needed, even every day. Make sure children understand the words you use. • Ask what other words or explanations they have heard. Explain any inaccuracies. 	<p>Continue to explain to your children that you are doing everything the experts tell you to do to be safe. You are staying home. And you wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and a lot of soapy bubbles.</p>

Communicating with Preschool-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>Not talking: Being silent or having difficulty saying what is bothering them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put common feelings of children into words, such as anger, sadness and worry about the safety of parents, friends and siblings. • Do not force children to talk. But let them know they can talk to you any time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw simple “feeling faces” on paper plates. Tell a brief story about each one, such as, “Remember when your brother broke his leg, and I had a worried face like this?” • Say something like, “Children can feel really sad or scared when someone they love is sick.” • Provide art or play materials to help them express themselves. Then use feeling words to check out how they felt. “This is a really scary picture. Were you scared when you saw the news last night?”
<p>Fears that someone at home will be diagnosed with the virus: Seeing or hearing something that reminds them of the virus, or another dangerous medical condition, can lead children to fear that someone they love will get sick.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the difference between reality, such as if someone at home would be diagnosed with the virus, and reminders of the virus. • Protect children as much as you can from reminders about illness and this virus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Even though I am tired, that doesn’t mean I have a virus. I’ve been really busy. Sometimes we just get a bit tired.” • Keep your children from seeing the news on TV and from hearing the news on the radio or TV. These things may trigger fear of a loved one getting sick.

Communicating with Preschool-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>Sleep problems: Fear of being alone at night or sleeping alone. Fear of waking up afraid or having bad dreams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure your children that they are safe. Spend extra quiet time together just before bedtime. • Let a child sleep with a dim light on or sleep with you for a short time. • Explain the difference between dreams and real life in language your children will understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide calming activities before bedtime. Tell a favorite story with a comforting theme. • At bedtime say, "You can sleep with us tonight, but tomorrow you'll sleep in your own bed." • "Bad dreams happen when we think about scary things happening. Bad dreams aren't about real things happening."
<p>Returning to earlier activities, also called behaviors: Examples include thumb sucking, wetting the bed, baby-talk, and often needing to be in your lap or touching you.</p>	<p>Remain neutral or matter-of-fact as best you can. These behaviors may continue a while.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child starts bedwetting, change his or her clothes and bed linens with a neutral face and without comment. • Don't let anyone criticize or shame a child by saying something like, "You're such a baby."

Communicating with Preschool-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>Not understanding about illnesses and death: Preschool-age children don't understand that some illnesses lead to death. And they don't understand that death can't be changed. They have "magical thinking." They may believe their thoughts caused the death.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give age-appropriate, consistent explanations about the reality of serious illnesses and death. Be reassuring, but don't give false hope. • Respect and validate children's worries and feelings. Don't minimize or dismiss their worries or feelings. • Take cues from what your children seem to want to know. Answer simply. Then ask whether they have more questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended questions so you can assess what your children have seen or overheard. For example, ask, "What have you heard about people who get this virus?" Correct any misinformation they have about the virus and death. • If a loved one dies, allow children to take part in cultural and religious grieving rituals if you think it's OK for them. • Help your children find their own way to say goodbye. This could be drawing a happy memory or lighting a candle or saying a prayer for them. • You can say, "No, Grandpa won't be back. But we can think about him and talk about the fun we had with him." • "The doctor said no one could save Grandma. I know you miss her very much. I do too."

Communicating with School-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
Confusion about what is going on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give clear explanations of what is going on whenever your children ask. Explain or correct any information that your children are confused about. Avoid details that may be scary. • Remind your children that your family members can get medical help if needed. • Tell your children what is likely to happen in the next few days or weeks related to home-schooling, work from home and physical distancing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I know other kids said that more people are going to get sick. But we are doing everything we can to stay healthy.” • Continue to patiently answer questions your children have. Assure them that you are doing everything you can to keep them safe. You are staying at home. And you wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and a lot of soapy bubbles.
Feeling responsible: School-age children may think that, somehow, they are at fault. Or they may think they should be able to change what is going on. They may not want to share these thoughts with other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your children opportunities to voice their concerns to you. Make a date to talk and walk, for example. • Offer reassurance and tell them why it is not their fault. 	You can say, “When someone gets sick, it’s OK to wonder, ‘What should they have done differently, so they wouldn’t get sick?’ Wondering about that doesn’t mean it’s their fault that they got sick.”

Communicating with School-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
Fear that the virus will come back. Reactions to reminders of the virus as time goes on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your children identify things that remind them of the virus. For example, these could be places, people, sounds, smells, feelings, and time of day. Explain the differences between the virus and reminders about it. • Assure the children as often as needed that the family is doing everything it can to be safe. • Protect children from seeing media coverage. It can trigger fear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they recognize that they are being reminded about the virus, say, "Try to think to yourself, 'I am upset because I am being reminded about the virus because Mom has a cold. But it's been a long time since anyone in our area got the virus. Mom only has a cold.'" • "I think we need to take a break from the TV right now."
Repeatedly talking about the virus or about people getting sick.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit your children to talk and act out these thoughts and feelings. Let them know that this is normal. • Encourage positive problem-solving by talking about it with them or using play or drawing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I notice you're drawing a lot of pictures of sick people. Did you know that many children do that?" • "It might help to draw about happy times, when we are all healthy and having fun together."
Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe place for your children to express their fears, anger, sadness, and so on. • Allow them to cry or be sad; don't expect them to be brave or tough. 	<p>"When scary things happen, people have strong feelings, like being mad at everyone or being very sad. Would you like to sit here with a blanket until you're feeling better?"</p>

Communicating with School-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
Physical symptoms: Headaches, stomachaches and muscle aches for which there seem to be no reason.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out whether there is a medical reason. If not, provide comfort and assurance that this is normal. Be brief when you talk about the symptoms. If you give non-medical symptoms too much attention, it may increase them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the child gets enough sleep, eats well, drinks plenty of water, and gets enough exercise. If a child isn't feeling well, you can say, "Why don't you sit on the couch and rest for a bit? When you feel better, let me know, and we can do something fun together."
Closely watching a parent's responses and recovery: Not wanting to disturb parent with their own worries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give children chances to talk about their feelings and to ask about yours. Remain as calm as you can. Try not to increase your child's worries. 	"Yes, I'm a little sad. I don't like the idea that anyone is sick or in the hospital. But I'm thinking about them (or praying for them). And I'm grateful that our family members are feeling good."
Concern for other victims and families.	Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others. But if the children are overwhelmed, more activities may be a burden.	Help children identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful. For example, they could make small posters that can be placed in the window for people in the hospital. Or they could collect money online to donate to people who don't have homes and are living in shelters.

Communicating with School-Age Children

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
Sleep problems: This includes bad dreams, fear of sleeping alone and demanding to sleep with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let your child tell you about the bad dream. Do not ask the child to go into too many details of the bad dream. Explain that bad dreams are normal. They will go away. Allow temporary sleeping arrangements. Make a plan with your child about when the usual sleeping arrangements will start again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "That was a scary dream. Let's think about some good things you can dream about. I'll rub your back until you fall asleep." "You can stay in our bedroom for the next couple of nights. Then we will spend more time with you in your bed before you go to sleep. If you get scared again, we can talk about it."
Concerns about their safety and the safety of others.	Help your children share their worries and give them realistic information.	Create a "worry box." Children can write out their worries and place them in the box. Set a time to look these over and come up with answers to the worries.
Altered behavior: Unusually aggressive or restless behavior.	Encourage the child to engage in recreational activities and exercise as an outlet for feelings of frustration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I know you didn't mean to slam that door. It must be hard to feel so angry." "Let's go for a walk. Sometimes getting our bodies moving helps with strong feelings."

Communicating with Adolescents

This information generally applies to teenagers and young adults. People in this age group also are called adolescents.

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
Self-consciousness about their fears, sense of vulnerability, fear of being labeled abnormal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help teens understand that these feelings are common. • Encourage relationships with family and peers for needed support at this time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I was feeling the same thing. Scared and helpless. Most people feel like this when there’s a pandemic, even if they look calm on the outside.” • “Why don’t you see if you can reach your friends to see how they are doing.” • “Thanks for playing a game with your little sister. She feels much better now.”
Acting-out behavior: Using alcohol or other drugs, acting out sexually, reckless behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help teens understand that acting out, also called reckless behavior, is a dangerous way to express strong feelings, such as anger. • Remove or lock up alcohol and any drugs, prescription or illegal. • Talk about the danger of high-risk sexual activity. • Tell teens to let you know where they are going and what they’re planning to do. If this will be on a temporary basis, talk about the timeline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Many teens, and some adults, feel out of control and angry after they experience something like this. They think drinking or taking drugs will help somehow. But it’s not a good idea to try to numb yourself like this. It won’t make this go away.” • “What kind of coping skills can you work on that will help you feel better when you are scared?”

Communicating with Adolescents

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>Fear that the virus will come back. Reactions to reminders of the virus as time goes on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your children identify things that remind them of the virus. For example, these could be places, people, sounds, smells, feelings, and time of day. Explain the differences between the virus and reminders about it. • Protect children from seeing media coverage. It can trigger fear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When you’re reminded, you might try saying to yourself, ‘I am upset now because I am being reminded. But it is different now because I’m keeping myself safe.’” • Consider telling your children, “Watching the news could make things worse, because they are playing the same images over and over. How about turning it off now?”
<p>Abrupt shifts in interpersonal relationships: Teens may pull away from parents, family and even peers; they may respond strongly to a parent’s reactions in the crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that a strain in relationships is understandable. Emphasize that people need family and friends for support at this time. Note that you aren’t going anywhere. When they want to talk, you’ll make time for it. • Encourage tolerance for family member’s comments, feelings and actions. Everyone may be overly tired and stressed. • Accept responsibility for your own comments, feelings and actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time talking as a family about how everyone is doing. Say, “You know, the fact that we’re crabby with each other is completely normal right now. I think we’re handling things really well. It’s a good thing we have each other.” • You might say, “I appreciate you being calm when your brother was screaming last night. I know he woke you up too.” • “I want to apologize for being irritable and raising my voice yesterday. I never want to scare you like that. I am going to work harder to stay calm.”

Communicating with Adolescents

Reactions and behaviors	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
Radical changes in attitude.	Explain that changes in people's attitudes after a pandemic are common. But they will return to normal over time.	"We are all under great stress. When people's lives are disrupted this way, we all feel scared or even angry. It might not seem like it, but we all will feel better when we get back to our usual routines."
Wanting premature entrance into adulthood: For example, wanting to leave school, move out of the family home or get married.	Encourage postponing major life decisions. Find other ways to make your children feel more in control over things.	"I know you're thinking about quitting school and getting a job to help out. But a crisis time is not a great time to make big decisions or major changes."
Concern for other victims and families.	Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others. But do not burden the teens with responsibilities that are not necessary.	Help teens identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful. For example, they could make small posters that can be placed in the window for people in the hospital. Or they could collect money online to donate to people who don't have homes and are living in shelters.
Detachment, shame and guilt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe time to discuss the virus with your children; listen to their feelings. • Emphasize that these feelings are common. If someone in your family has the virus, correct any blame; explain how easily the virus is passed. 	"Many kids and adults feel like you do: angry and blaming themselves that they didn't avoid this. We are not at fault. Sometimes things just happen. But it's good that we're isolating ourselves and taking care of ourselves."

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