

## Parenting during COVID-19

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### Parent Self Care

This is number one on the list because our kids are only as healthy as we are. Kids pick up the anxiety and stress around them. If we remain calm, they are more likely to do the same. Make sure that you are taking care of yourself by sleeping, eating, moving your body and putting down the news/social media.

Think about this like being on a plane. If the oxygen masks come down, you put your mask on first then put your child's on.

### Keep it Normal!

Kids thrive on routine. Help them to see the things that have not changed. Routine helps kids feel safe. Anxiety will grow to fill the space we give it-structure and routine help to decrease the space for anxiety to grow.

If you are in isolation or schools/day cares close you can help kids by creating a daily routine at home.

Write out the routine or do a picture schedule for younger kids.

Let kids contribute to activities for the day, but parents set the overall structure.

Things to include:

Regular routines (Get up, get dressed, brush teeth, eat breakfast as if you are going to your normal day)

Play

Learning

Creative Time

Outside play (if appropriate)

Screen time

Chores

Multiple times to move your body! Physical activity helps with big emotions and regulation.

Plan for downtime. This could be naps or quiet time. Explain to your kids that everyone (including grownups) need downtime during the day. Make sure parents get downtime too.

Talk about what isn't Normal

Kids need to know that we are being honest with them. If field trips and activities are being cancelled it is okay to talk about it. Be honest, be respectful, and stay calm.

Answer questions with factual knowledge. Avoid talking too much. Kid's will ask more questions if they have them.

It is okay to say you don't know! You can model that you might not have all the answers but will go to people you trust to answer their questions.

Listen and Validate what kids are feeling

Lots of big emotions can come up during this time. We can't help kids move through a tough emotion if we don't let them have it. If kids are upset, scared, or sad validate these feelings. In validating we help a child to regulate.

Validation template: Of course you are feeling (insert feeling here) because (give three reasons for the feeling).

Examples:

Of course you are feeling angry because school activities are getting cancelled, and birthday parties are being cancelled and it feels like you are stuck with nothing to do!

Of course you are feeling scared because it feels like everything is changing and it is really hard to predict what will happen, lots of adults seem scared and there are a lot of "I don't know" answers when you ask a question.

This is a simple explanation of a big concept. Go to You Tube and check out "Dan Siegel name it to tame it" or "Brene Brown Empathy" for more information.

When in doubt, validate it. Kid's feelings about this are valid. Kids are not dumb. They will know that staying at home is not as much fun as the vacation you had planned.

After you validate and your child is better regulated you can still redirect or set a boundary. Validation makes it more likely that boundaries and redirection will be listened to (come to the workshop when we reschedule!!)

Let Them Play!

Kids process their world through play. If COVID-19 starts showing up in play it is normal. If kids start to get scared or overwhelmed in their play of COVID-19 you can jump in and help them resolve the problem through play. Have a superhero jump in to defeat the virus, have Elsa put it in a snow storm and blow it away, call the Paw Patrol, have a wizard cast a spell (maybe a patronus for the Harry Potter fans). You can build a cage out of Lego. My favorite is to get kids to draw a picture of what is upsetting them and shredding it or hanging it up and throwing wet paper towels at it (messy but satisfying!).

Expect regressions. During times of stress we will see kids act younger or lose skills, like potty training. You may see more baby play which is a way of feeling more attached. If regression continues for a prolonged period after a stressor it is worth seeking help. In the stressful situation it is not a cause for concern.

Frame being home as being “superheros” for your community. By staying home you are keeping others safe.

Help your kids see some of the positives of time at home. Extra family time, having time for bigger Lego or art projects, finding toys they haven’t played with in a while.