

How to help your family cope with the pandemic

We are now over two months into the school year. We are all adapting to the new normal. The challenge has been trying to maintain some family routine while helping your child stay focused on schoolwork. Children may feel uneasy during this time. They need to feel safe and that all will be ok. Your child will look to you for guidance on how to manage the new normal. Your reactions and how you cope can impact your child's resilience. Here are some suggestions on supporting your child and creating resilience.

Be a role model- Your child will feed off your reaction to stress. If you stay calm and find healthy ways to manage stress this will influence how your child learns to manage bumps in life.

Be mindful of how you talk about COVID-19- Reassure your child that you are doing everything to keep them safe and healthy. Allow your child to express their fears and concerns.

Explain why we need to continue social distancing and to continue to wear a face covering- I am sure we all want to socialize and see our friends like we did before. Children want to hang with their buddies and do those activities they enjoyed. Help them to fully understand that social distancing and wearing a face covering have been recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Reinforce that they are being a big help to others and themselves by following these guidelines. Make sure the information is accurate and age appropriate.

Do a gratitude check-in- We tend to focus on what we cannot do instead of discovering things we CAN do. You can have a brainstorm session with your child to discover what opportunities are available. Encourage your child to focus on what they have. They can write these thoughts down in a journal or post them on the refrigerator.

Be a role model of basic hygiene and healthy habits- Make daily hygiene part of the family routine. Encourage frequent handwashing, covering cough and sneezes with the elbow and encourage healthy eating habits. Make a meal together to foster a child's sense of control, belonging and safety. Your child might be more willing to try a new food.

Stay in touch with your child's teacher and school nurse- Your child's teacher can offer support to ensure learning continues. Reach out to your school nurse if you have concerns about your child's mental health or physical health. Consider reaching out to your medical provider as well.

“Daring greatly means the courage to be vulnerable. It means to show up and be seen. To ask for what you need. To talk about how you are feeling. To have the hard conversations.”

-Brené Brown

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/children.html>
- Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About, <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>
- NASP COVID-19 Resource Center, <https://www.nasponline.org/COVID-19>

Sievering, K. (2020). Helping children cope with the changes resulting from COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>