

# "At Home With the Family" Resources and Ideas, #1

As public health experts stress the importance of social distancing in slowing the spread of the novel coronavirus, families are challenged with how to maintain positive mental health. In our commitment to support NYS families and caregivers, we will be sending regular emails with strategies, tips and resources. Please share these with families you work with, as well as your friends, family and colleagues.

Stay informed:

The CDC offers specific information for [protecting your family](#).

This article from [NPR](#) helps to explain coronavirus to youth.

---

## **Social distancing does not mean social isolation.**

Social isolation is a known risk factor for mental health disorders, substance use and dementia, especially for those who are already vulnerable. During this time, it's important to be vigilant about maintaining positive social interactions. Luckily technology can help.

Reach out to friends and family daily, especially those who are alone. Try not to focus on the current situation; mix it up with these conversation starters:

- tell me something I don't know about you.
  - tell me a family story I've never heard.
  - tell me about your first job.
  - if you could have dinner with any three people, living or deceased, who would it be and why?
  - if you were stranded on a deserted island, what three (foods, books, etc) would you want?
- 

## **Maintain a regular routine.**

While its ok to stay in your pajamas and binge watch your favorite shows if that makes you feel good, two weeks is a bit much! Maintain routine provides structure and encourages healthy choices, and helps us to be mindful and stay present.

- Prepare and eat meals together, and disconnect from technology.
- Schedule time to do something that helps you relax - reading, yoga, walking the dog, etc.
- Schedule cardio and strength exercise using fitness routines, apps and videos from web.

- Encourage routine hygiene - teeth brushing, showering, getting dressed, etc.
- Keep up with regular activities, such as practicing instruments and karate at home

**Looking for resources?** YouTube is filled with yoga videos; enter "yoga for kids" or "family yoga" in the search bar and gyms like the [YMCA](#) have online classes posted. Pinterest is a great resource for quick craft projects and kid-friendly recipes. Finally, many services are working to provide online options. Check with your kids' music teachers, tutors, etc. for virtual instruction or suggestion for online resources.

---

## Remember to breathe.

When we are stressed, we tend to tense up and our breathing is limited. Practice breathing even when you don't think you need to. There are many different techniques. Find what is most comfortable for you. A few tips:

- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
  - Count or repeat a phrase to keep your breathe steady. A common recommendation is 4-7-8 (inhale for 4, hold for 7, exhale for 8). If this is uncomfortable, modify the count. Another recommendation is a 1:2 ratio (inhale:exhale).
  - Search YouTube for "breathing with guided imagery" or use a free app such as Calm to help visualize your breathing.
  - Make your own bubbles. Blowing bubbles forces us to exhale slowly. There are many DIY bubble recipes online.
- 

## Get crafty!

- Make worry stones. Collect smooth stones from around your house and write inspirational words on them with a marker. Place them around your house to rub, when needed.
- Make a glitter jar. This article from [Parents](#) magazine provides the "how to" and the "why".
- DIY coping cards: brainstorm ideas for things to do when stressed and draw or write them on index cards or pieces of paper. There are also many printable options online.