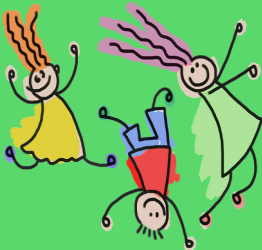


### Steps to Help Provide Stability and Support to Young Children

- Maintain a normal routine
- Talk, listen, and encourage expression
- Give honest and accurate information
- Take simple steps to stay healthy



## *Coronavirus And How It Affects The Social, Emotional, and Mental Health of Children*

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can affect children and young people directly and indirectly. Beyond getting sick, many young people's social, emotional, and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic. Some of the challenges children and young people are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic relate to:

### **Changes in their routines** (e.g., having to physically distance from family, friends)

Having to physically distance from someone you love—like a grandparent, friends, your worship community, or sick family members—can be hard for children. It is important for adults to support children in taking time to check in with friends and family to see how they are doing.

### **Breaks in continuity of learning** (e.g., virtual learning environments, technology access)

Intermittent daycare and school closures may mean that young children have to stay at home while parents and caregiver juggle caretaking, supervision of play and learning, and potential telework responsibilities. Keeping young children at home is one way to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Depending on your child's age and ability, supervision of play may require more hands-on engagement. Unfortunately, some parents do not have jobs that offer telework. It is important for parents to determine how their family's composition and access to social supports (i.e., individual and work policies) could make caretaking of young children less challenging. For families with children who have special needs, extra social supports may be required.

### **Breaks in continuity of health care** (e.g., missed well-child and immunization visits)

Parents may have felt pressured to avoid seeking health care due to earlier stay-at-home orders and may continue to do so because they are afraid of getting sick with COVID-19. However, well-child visits and immunizations are important to maintain the health of your child. Similarly, social services closures may have impacted many young children's ability to receive other therapeutic services, like speech and occupational health. It is important to ensure children receive continuity of health care, including checking on their development at well-child visits, continuing speech, mental health, and occupational health therapies (e.g. via telehealth), and receiving vaccines for illnesses such as measles, influenza, whooping cough, and others. Developmental milestones matter.

### **Missed significant life events** (e.g., grief of missing celebrations, vacation plans)

Physical distancing can make you feel as if your family's life is on hold. Birthdays, vacation plans, births, and funerals are just a few of the many significant life events that families may miss experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing, stay-at-home orders, and limited gatherings have affected the ability of friends and family to come together in-person to celebrate and/or grieve in typical ways. When parents or caregivers experience grief, young children may also experience emotional challenges. It is important to have honest conversations with young children about grief as a normal response to losing someone or something important to you. For Also, be creative in ways to celebrate life events differently—birthday parades and virtual celebrations with family and friends can help.

### Steps to Help Provide Stability and Support to Children

- Maintain a normal routine
- Talk, listen, and encourage expression
- Give honest and accurate information
- Teach simple steps to stay healthy
- Be alert for any change in behavior.
- Reassure children about their safety and well-being

**Lost security and safety** (e.g., housing and food insecurity, increased exposure to violence and online harms, threat of physical illness and uncertainty for the future)

Being safe and feeling safe are essential for young children. Economic insecurity is linked to adverse childhood experiences that can negatively impact their social-emotional development, learning, and health. Young children living in families that are experiencing economic difficulties may feel unsafe. They may have inconsistent access to healthy foods, safe transportation, and housing. It is important for parents to access social supports and services—including mental health services. Telemental health and national helplines may provide emergency options for emotional and mental health support during a crisis. Moreover, being attentive and responsive to a young child's behaviors or questions can help support feelings of safety.

### What Can You Do?

#### *Recognize and address fear, stress and behavior changes*

- Excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration are some signs of stress in children.
- Adults can take steps to provide stability and support to help children cope.

#### *Teach and reinforce everyday preventive actions*

- Find ways to encourage proper hygiene and health promoting behavior with your children (create drawings to remember family routines; sing a song for length needed to wash hands like the A-B-C or Happy Birthday song, twice).
- Include them in household jobs or activities so they feel a sense of accomplishment. Provide praise and encouragement for engaging in household jobs and good hygiene.
- Be a good role model— if adults wash their hands often, stay at least 6 feet apart from others, and wear their mask in public spaces to help protect themselves and others, then children are more likely to do the same.

#### *Help keep children healthy*

- Schedule well-child and immunizations visits for children.
- Seek continuity in mental health services, speech/occupational therapy, and other care.
- Help children to eat healthy and make good choices.
- Encourage children to play outdoors. Physical activity is a stress reliever and is great for both physical and mental health.

#### *Help children stay socially connected*

- Reach out to friends and family via phone or video chats.
- Write cards or letters to family members they may not be able to visit.

#### **Upcoming Events:**

##### **October 12, 2020:**

School Closed—Columbus Day

##### **October 30, 2020**

Shortened Day

Happy Halloween!

##### **Next Issue:**

November 9, 2020

\*\*\*Please see the table on page three to view strategies to help our children cope per age group.

## Helping Children Cope

Children will respond differently to the stress of an outbreak depending on their age. The table below includes some reactions according to age group and provides some strategies to respond.

AGE GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
PRESCHOOL	Fear of being alone Bad dreams Speech Difficulties Loss of bladder/bowl control, constipation, bed-wetting Change in appetite Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors	Patience and tolerance Provide reassurance both verbal and physical Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling Allow short-term changes in sleeping arrangements Plan calming, comforting activities at bedtime Maintain regular family routines Avoid Media Exposure
SCHOOL AGE (6-12 YEARS OLD)	Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior Clinging, nightmares Sleep/Appetite disturbance Physical Symptoms (headaches, stomach-aches) Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest Competition for parents' attention Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school	Patience, tolerance, and reassurance Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone or virtually Regular exercise and stretching Engage in educational activities or games Participate in structured household chores Set gentle but firm limits Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions Encourage expression through play and conversation Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school Address any signs of discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
ADOLESCENT (13-18 YEARS OLD)	Physical Symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) Sleep/Appetite disturbance Agitation, decrease in energy, apathy Ignoring health promotion behaviors Isolating from peers and loved ones Concerns about stigma and injustices Avoiding school	Patience, tolerance, reassurance Encourage continuation of routines Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force) Maintain contact with friends through telephone, internet, video games Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school Discuss and address stigma, prejudice, and potential injustices occurring during outbreak