

# Tips for Helping Children Cope with COVID-19

Children are home. There is no school and there are few daycare options. You may be off work or trying to balance work and home life. Even though we are stressed and overwhelmed during the COVID-19 pandemic, we still have a life to live and so do our children. We need to take time each day to support our children with the changes going on in their lives. Here are some tips that might help:

- 1) **Encourage open discussions.** Create a safe and comfortable space where your child feels comfortable talking with you. Colour or paint together while gently asking a couple of questions. Check in with your child about how they are feeling by asking (depending on age) or using emoji faces. Do not push questions or responses. If your child asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, it is ok to say you don't know. Let your child know they can always come to you to talk and listen.
- 2) **Talk to your child about what they can do to stay safe.** This allows your child to feel a sense of control. Practice washing your hands together or teach your child problem solving skills. Write down all possible solutions to a problem and pick some to try.
- 3) **Find creative ways to help children stay connected to friends and family members while physically distancing.** Have a Zoom or FaceTime scavenger hunt with friends (each child gets the same list of items to find), make friends and family members cards or paintings, host a Netflix movie party.
- 4) **Keep up routines and structure.** Children often do well with a routine; knowing what to expect can be calming during a time of stress. Your child still needs nutrition and quality sleep. Maintaining a sleep and meal routine will help your child stay healthy and strong. Sample schedule: wake up, breakfast, school work, lunch, play time (some of this outdoors), dinner, activities or movie, get ready for bed, bedtime. Hold on to normalcy.
- 5) **Manage your own anxiety and stress.** Children pick up on your emotions and changes in your mood. Limit your news consumption, try to think about things you are grateful for, ask for help if needed (contact local crisis line), try guided visualization, or find something that makes you laugh (comedy show, music, etc.).
- 6) **Teach your child relaxation strategies.** Children get stressed, too. A few relaxation strategies are:
  - a. Tighten and release. Have your child tighten muscles in the body and then release, so they are squeezing, holding for 2 seconds and then releasing.
  - b. Let the laughs out. Find ways to help your child laugh such as funny faces, Youtube videos, artwork, etc.
  - c. Create worry bubbles. Make bubbles and have your child imagine placing their worries in a bubble then watching them float away. For more ideas see the psychology foundation tool box.

[https://psychologyfoundation.org/Content/Parents/Children\\_4-13\\_/Kids-Have-Stress-Too-.aspx](https://psychologyfoundation.org/Content/Parents/Children_4-13_/Kids-Have-Stress-Too-.aspx)

Many of us feel out of control and stressed right now. So do some of our children. Children may not express their feelings in the same ways that we do, but they still have emotions and feelings. Hopefully these tips are useful; you can find links to more resources on our website at: <https://kchc.ca/covid-19-updates/>

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