



Managing Stress During COVID-19 A Resource for Parents

We as parents...

are dealing with a lot right now. Our kids are home from school and daycare while many of us try to balance working from home or arranging safe childcare while we continue to work in essential industries. Some of us are without work and are worried about how to continue paying our bills and providing for our family's basic needs.

We are not alone.

During these uncertain and unprecedented times, stress levels are high, and many of us are no longer able to cope in ways we used to, like spending time with friends or leaning on family members for help with childcare.

When stress is high and support and social connection are low, we as parents might be more likely to lash out in ways we ordinarily wouldn't under different circumstances. Now more than ever, it is crucial for us to recognize and acknowledge these feelings and proactively identify healthy ways to cope with stress.

Many parents have found the following suggestions helpful:

- 1. Give Yourself Some Grace.** Accept that this is not going to be the most productive time in your life. It is okay if all you do during this time is simply get your family through each day and make sure everyone remains safe and healthy and has their basic needs met.
- 2. Aim for Routine and Structure.** During these uncertain times, some families find it helpful to maintain a daily routine. Develop a schedule that includes time for schoolwork, breaks, eating, and playtime. While structure can be helpful, it's also important to be flexible and give yourself and your children permission to relax the routine as needed.
- 3. Talk to Your Child.** Take time to speak with your children about the COVID-19 pandemic in developmentally appropriate ways. Reassure your child that it is okay to feel upset and let them know they are safe, protected, and supported.
- 4. Take Care of Your Body.** As hard as it may be, focus on the basics like getting enough sleep, eating fruits and vegetables, drinking plenty of water, and getting some exercise each day.
- 5. Spend Time Outside.** If possible, try to spend some time outside every day when the weather permits. Fresh air, nature, and sunshine can boost your mood, and being outside can give everyone a much-needed change in scenery. Going for walks, planning a picnic, or playing a game of tag are all safe options as long as everyone keeps a 6-foot distance from people outside of their household.

6. **Find Support.** Socialization and self-care are vital in helping reduce stress levels. Schedule calls and video chats with friends, family members, or other parents. If possible, schedule virtual playtimes with friends for your child as well or find ways for them to stay connected with their teachers and other school staff virtually.
7. **Take News Breaks.** It's easy to get overwhelmed and experience feelings of anxiety and hopelessness when reading or hearing about COVID-19 frequently throughout the day. Try to find the right balance regarding how much news content you need and limiting your exposure to the information you find particularly upsetting. Taking breaks from social media can be helpful too.
8. **Look for Bright Spots.** It can be hard to stay positive right now, but take time to acknowledge what is going well for your family and find opportunities to make the best of the situation. You may find that you have more time to connect with family in new and creative ways. Do a project together, plan a family game night, or cook a meal together.
9. **Pay Attention to How You are Feeling.** Be mindful of your feelings and recognize when your stress levels are reaching capacity. If you feel frustrated or angry with your child, take a break, walk away, and find a way to calm down. Do not lash out at your child in a way you may regret later.
10. **Ask for Help.** Many counselors and support groups have transitioned to virtual services to help people cope while staying safe. It is always okay to reach out for help.

Several organizations have put together informational materials to give parents tools to manage stressors caused by COVID-19.

- [COVID-19: Help for Parents to Weather the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
- [WHO: Healthy Parenting in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Advice for Parents Experiencing Stress Over COVID-19](#)
- [Talking to Your Child About the Coronavirus](#)
- [CDC: Stress and Coping During COVID-19](#)
- [Positive Parenting & COVID-19: 10 Tips to Help Keep the Calm at Home](#)
- [Tips for Coping with a New Baby During COVID-19](#)

The Texas Youth Helpline

Call 1-800-989-6884 – Text 512-872-5777 or Chat

Online - https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Youth_Helpline/default.asp

This website is a service of the Texas Youth Helpline which provides prevention services to youths, parents, siblings, and other family members who are in need of a caring voice and sympathetic ear. Trained volunteers are on call to provide guidance on youth-related concerns, referral information, or simply listen.

Statewide COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line

Call 833-986-1919 – Available 24/7

Texas Health and Human Services has launched a 24/7 statewide mental health support line to help Texans experiencing anxiety, stress or emotional challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.