

Helping Your Children Cope During COVID-19



It's been decades since something as severe as COVID-19 has swept the nation. Within a matter of weeks, the school year as we knew it came to a screeching halt. As parents you are now sorting out work schedules, childcare, and online schooling, through all of this your kids are likely to have mixed emotions and big emotions at that.

Your role in supporting your children during this time is important, but you don't have to manage it on your own. We've pulled together ideas for how you can help your kids navigate these uncertain times.

1) Create space for their emotions. Children look to adults to understand the world around them. You can help them feel safe and cared for in a stressful situation by creating space for them to share their emotions. Some tips: make time to talk, set the tone by speaking in a calm manner, listen with your full attention (no phones or TV to distract), acknowledge what your child says they are feeling, and help them to gain appropriate perspective. ¹

2) Teach (and model) healthy coping strategies. Learning how to respond to stressful situations is an important life skill when it comes to building resiliency. We encourage you to use this time to teach and model healthy coping strategies for your children. This could be a daily walk, journaling, trying a mindfulness practice or practicing breathing exercises (your child may be familiar with these from school).

3) Come up with a routine. Routines help children feel safe and promote good physical and emotional health. ¹ It's helpful to keep bedtimes, to get dressed for the day, to sit down to eat meals, and to set aside time for schoolwork and for play.

4) Limit television and social media time. Some people, excessively follow the progress of COVID-19 (watching numerous news shows, reading articles, following daily statistics about COVID-19), thinking that information will make them feel safer. But all that information can make the risks seem greater. In the end, reading and watching excessive amounts of news are just as likely to increase our anxiety.

5) Be well informed. Although it is important to balance how much television and social media our children watch, it is also important to stay informed through trustworthy sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC CoronaVirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)). Stay up to date on changes in the situation and recommendations from health officials before talking to your children about the things they *can* do to keep healthy – social distancing, hand washing, exercise and plenty of sleep. The sooner everyone is healthy, the sooner they can see their friends again.

6) Handling disappointment. Your child may be sad, upset or disappointed that they are missing out on important events: birthday parties, sleepovers, field trips, prom or graduation. These feelings of disappointment are valid and letting your child be upset is healthy. Share that others are probably feeling sad too and that in life, disappointment happens. Talk to them about why these events are being cancelled (for the health and safety of everyone). Acknowledge their disappointment and help them to understand how their actions are helping our communities get through this crisis. Reassure them that this will pass and they'll have opportunities to enjoy fun activities in the future. Encourage your child to make plans for a future without COVID-19. Dream big! ²

Our Depression and Stress, Anxiety and Worry programs have helped individuals find freedom from anxiety, fear and discouragement and refresh their lives. Learn to Live offers support for you and your family members (13 and older) as a no-cost benefit through your employer.

Visit learntolive.com/partners and use the code **INTACT1** to get started. If you're already a member, simply sign-in with your username and password.

Warmly,

The Learn to Live Team

