

Coping Guide for Families Affected by COVID-19

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This document is a list of resources to help children and families create stability and manage stress. It also includes a set of resources to help navigate the uncertainty of the health of loved ones, financial instability, challenges associated with securing food and other self-care resources, and potential job insecurity.

As people take precautions amid the spread of COVID-19, many are experiencing anxiety, including children. It is important to note that children may show signs of anxiety and stress in [different ways](#) than adults.

- Younger children may become irritable, fearful, seek more attention, or have changes in appetite and bladder/bowel control.
- School-age children may show some similar signs in addition to having more headaches and stomachaches, withdrawing from social interactions, and being more forgetful.
- Adolescents may also show physical symptoms of anxiety including headaches, changes in sleep and appetite, and decreased energy; in addition, adolescents are at risk for ignoring health promoting behaviors and isolating from peers and loved ones.

Parents may also feel worry, fear, loneliness, boredom, irritability, sadness, anger, and hopelessness. These reactions are normal, natural responses to challenging and uncertain situations! It is important to recognize these feelings and allow children to talk about their reactions and feel heard by their caregivers. At the same time, it is easy—and even normal—for children and adults alike, to get stuck in a mess of worries about things out of their control. One thing that may help is to **focus on what is in your control** — *what you do with your time*.

Some ideas of ways to look after yourself and your loved ones during this time are:

- Setting to and sticking to a [regular schedule](#) is key, even when you and your children are home all day. Consistency and structure are comforting, especially for young children, during times of stress. Encourage your children to wake up, eat, and go to bed at regular times each day. It may help to [print out a schedule](#) and go over it as a family each morning. [This guide](#) has an example schedule and list of activities for age groups from toddlers to adolescents.
- With extra time at home while schools are closed, it will be important for children to engage in creative ways to keep the mind and body active and stay connected with family and friends.

- It also may be helpful for parents to provide children with age-appropriate information about COVID-19, and to take steps to manage their own worries. Resources and ideas are provided below.

General Tips for Caregivers: Managing Anxiety and Stress

Taking care of yourself and your own mental and physical health is the most important way to be present for a child. Ensure that you are taking care of both yourself and your child(ren).

1. Staying informed is important, but it's a good idea to **limit consumption of news** and social media that has the potential to feed your anxiety.
 - Set a daily limit or take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. You may even find it helpful to unfollow friends or coworkers on social media who are prone to sharing panic-inducing posts.
 - Avoid the endless scroll: Select a few go-to news sources, and refrain from scrolling through other media. Some news sources have made their coronavirus-related news coverage free, including [The New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Star Tribune](#), and others.
 - Make a point of following social media accounts that share content that bring you joy, whether it's about nature, art, pets, baking or crafts.
2. Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
3. Make time to unwind. Try to do some activities you enjoy and to spend time in nature.
4. Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Be thoughtful about which concerns you talk about within earshot of children. If you are struggling with your emotional reactions, you may consider connecting with a mental health professional, many of whom are offering teletherapy.
5. **Be kind to yourself!** Nobody is a perfect parent or caregiver, and everyone is just trying to adapt day by day. If some days, you don't meet your goals, that is okay. We are all working through this day by day. Give yourself time to figure out your new routine and your new limits.

Talking to Your Kids about COVID-19

1. [Child Trends Guide](#) for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-Being
 - Offers information on supporting and protecting children's emotional well-being as this public health crisis unfolds
2. **"Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus"**
 - A comic based on a radio story by NPR reporter Cory Turner, based on interviews with experts. Click [HERE](#). [Also available in Chinese](#).

3. **PBS Kids:** [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#)
 - Gives age-appropriate information and explains how to form “germ-busting habits.” Includes a list of videos, games, and activities about handwashing and taking care of yourself.
4. **The National Child and Traumatic Stress Network:** [COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers](#)
 - Lists basic facts, tips for readiness, suggestions for coping with the stress of an infectious disease outbreak, and common reactions to stress according to age group along with ways caregivers can respond. The NCTSN also has a helpful [tip-sheet](#) for parents of young children facing crises.

Tips for Managing Multiple Siblings in the House

Sibling arguing is likely to increase during times of stress and when cooped up inside the house. Here are some tips for minimizing conflict between siblings in the home:

1. Schedule some one-on-one time with each child, each day. Sometimes conflict between siblings is actually about drawing attention from adults. See if you can schedule individual time with each child for at least fifteen minutes a day where they know they will have your undivided attention, whether that’s to read a book or play a game or go on a walk together.
2. Create schedules for popular toys/activities: If children are fighting over access to a favorite toy or game, whether it’s the Nintendo switch or only jump rope, sit down to come up with a fair schedule. If the children are old enough, they can enforce the schedule themselves, and if they are not able to do so peacefully, the toy/game can be off limits for the rest of the day.
3. “Putting children in the same boat” is a positive discipline tactic that could be helpful during this time. Instead of painting yourself as the judge and jury of conflicts, try to create incentives for them to solve their conflicts on their own (as long as no one is getting hurt). Often the child who is instigating will be able to take responsibility after some time to cool down, especially if they do not feel they got blamed right away.

Examples of how to do this include:

- “It seems like you both need to cool off. Take some time to calm down in your rooms and come out when you are ready to talk.”
- “If this toy is causing conflict, I’m going to put it away until you are both ready to play peacefully.”

For more resources on Positive Discipline, including ways you can incorporate children into chores and house management in an empowering way, check out the [Positive Discipline Action Plan For Staying Home With Children](#).

Fun for the Family

Ideas for Staying Physically Active

1. Dance

- Have a Dance Party:
 - Take a break and put on some tunes to dance to with your kids! Make it a real party and invite friends or family to join via video chat.
 - [MommyPoppins](#) has a list of great family-friendly concerts being streamed daily and/or weekly online, including singalongs, tutorials, and stories.
 - Follow along with Beyonce's [Move Your Body](#) dance video.
- Learn Some New Dance Moves:
 - Get over to www.youtube.com and explore the endless options of dance tutorials. Some popular options include: [Mihran Kirakosian's dance tutorials](#) and [CJ and Friends](#).
 - SAATH Bollywood Dance Classes (Thursdays): [SAATH](#), the South Asian Arts and Theater House based in Minneapolis, hosts dance lessons every Thursday night at 7pm CST. During the outbreak, Saath is putting on free dance tutorials via their [YouTube channel](#). Here is the [most recent lesson](#), originally live-streamed on March 19, 2020.

2. Yoga

- A number of studies have shown that yoga may reduce stress and anxiety. There are many youtube channels with free yoga sessions, including [Yoga with Adriene](#) and [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#).

3. Exercise

- Health experts say it is [safe](#) and can be [restorative](#) for you and your children to get outside. Just remember to keep a distance of at least 6-feet between yourself and those who do not live in your home. You could go on a run, jog around the neighborhood, walk the dog, bike or stroll along paths, or visit parks and nature preserves. You could even try creating an obstacle course or scavenger hunt for the family.
- From boot camp to yoga, YMCA launched [60 free online classes](#) for people at home. Lifetime Fitness Clubs have also made some of their most popular classes [available in video format online](#), as have [many other gyms](#).
- For younger kids, try a "[Shake Break!](#)"
- For older kids who want a serious work-out, check out [this video](#).

Ideas for Mental Wellness

1. Breathe In Calmness

- Join Elmo, Common, and Colbie Caillat for some fun [belly breathing](#) with your young child.
- Practice deep breathing by blowing bubbles together.
- New Horizon: Kids Meditation and Sleep Stories can help your little one fall asleep more easily, and are available on [youtube](#) and through an [app](#).
- Meditation has widespread physical and mental health [benefits](#). There are many meditation apps available, including [Calm](#), [Headspace](#), [Insight Timer](#), and [Simple Habit](#). Most are free with options for in-app purchases. Many of these apps include newly uploaded, free guided meditations specifically for the current climate. Simple Habit [announced free premium memberships](#) for “all people who are impacted by the pandemic and can no longer afford to pay.” Just send an email to help@simplehabit.com and note that they’re in a precarious financial position due to the pandemic. Access includes free meditation collections through the end of April.

2. Find your Inner Bookworm

- Read that book on your shelf that you’ve always wanted to get around to. Consider reading a book aloud with your child and discuss how they relate to it.
- Cozy up with an eBook or audiobook!
 - [Read or listen](#) to free, public-domain books.
 - [Apply](#) for a library card with the Hennepin County Library System. Using this library card, you can [borrow eBooks, downloadable audiobooks, and stream music](#) on the [Libby App](#) (the app is free to download on your cell phone).
- Check out [Audible Stories](#), a new service through which the company will be providing free audiobooks for small children and teens for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Created to instill a love of reading in young people, [this website](#) has a collection of children’s stories read aloud by actors and actresses from the Screen Actors Guild.
- Ask close friends or family to record a video of themselves reading a children’s book for your child to watch.

3. Cook Up Something Tasty

- [Cooking With Kids](#), a culinary education organization based in New Mexico, has an online archive of classroom-tested recipes. Invite your kids into the kitchen and get cookin’!

- Smitten Kitchen provides [numerous recipes](#) that rely heavily on pantry staples to entice even when trips to the grocery store are few and far between.
- Blogger, Aleka Gürel, has a great [list of recipes](#) made from either perishable or shelf-stable items, including some baked goods.

4. Get Hooked on a New Podcast

- There are many funny, smart, and scientific podcasts geared toward kids, including:
 - [Circle Round](#) (Ages 4-10) Dreamed up by parents of young children, this podcast features folktales from all over the globe and is a huge hit with parents and kids alike).
 - [StoryTime](#) (Ages 2-13) This podcast consists of 20-minute whimsical stories published every two weeks.
 - [Peace Out](#) (Ages 5-12) This podcast, narrated by Chanel Tsang, offers short stories that aim to promote mindfulness, self-regulation, and relaxation for young children.
 - [Smash Boom Best](#) (Ages 7+) This virtual debate show pits topics kids love (from pizza vs. tacos to piranhas vs. Venus flytraps), and listeners can take part by voting online.
 - [Be Calm on Ahway Island](#) (all ages) Thanks to the hosts' soothing voices and a pre-story meditation, your kid might fall asleep to this podcast before the story even gets underway. But if not, the gentle adventures on Ahway Island will also sweep them off to dreamland. This podcast teaches kid-friendly mindfulness practices like "deep dragon breaths" that can be carried into waking life as well.
 - [Stories Podcast](#) (Ages 8+) One of the first kids' podcasts to grasp podcasts' storytelling capabilities, this podcast is still going strong with kid-friendly renditions of classic stories, fairy tales, and original works. These longer stories with a vivid vocabulary are great for bigger kids past the age for picture books but who still love a good bedtime story.

5. Take a Tour from your Couch

- Many of the world's largest and best museums have closed to encourage social distancing. You can tour the collections of more than 1200 museums for free online through the [Google Arts and Culture catalog](#). Start with its [top 10 virtual museum tour list](#), or just browse through the online catalog for top children's museums, or favorite periods.
- Ready to explore Yellowstone National Park? You can [virtually tour](#) some of the main attractions around the park. Included with each tour is additional information about visiting in person.

- Go on a safari! The [Cincinnati Zoo](#) is connecting you and your family with animals and educational content daily at 2pm CST.

6. Unleash your Inner Artist

- Artist Jarrett Krosoczka hosts a YouTube series called [Draw Every Day with JJK](#).
- [Lunch Doodles with Mo Willems!](#) Mo invites you into his studio, doodles, and teaches you how to make finger puppets! This includes a worksheet for each day's Lunch Doodle.
- Make a [collage](#) with old magazines, wrapping paper, and more!
- Learn to [knit](#) a scarf for a cold day.
- Mix it up and make your own [fluffy slime](#) or [playdough](#) or [moon sand](#).
- Get creative! Let the kids play with cardboard boxes or other disposable items around the house.

7. Get on Your Lab Coat

- [Coding Programs for Kids](#): There are many websites offering free or low-cost courses to teach kids programming.
- Pacific Science Center has put together a ton of science resources for kids while they're learning at home. [PacSci Curiosity at Home](#) has daily activities like live video streams, interaction with experts, hands-on STEM tutorials, interviews, and experiments of all sorts.
- Try the [Space Place](#), where kids can play games, do online crafts, and more, all relating to NASA.
- University of Colorado Boulder offers [interactive simulations](#) for investigating physics, chemistry, math, earth science, and biology.
- [MommyPoppins](#) has lots of great ideas for science experiments that can be done with household supplies. A few examples:
 - Make homemade ice cream in a bag: shake salt, ice, cream, and sugar vigorously until the consistency is right, then enjoy.
 - Build a container for an egg that protects it from breaking and then test it out by dropping it from on high.
 - Force an egg to fit into a bottle by creating a suction using heat.
- Play games! Some games can help with kids' executive functioning skills. Play games where kids have to take turns, or [red-light green-light](#) for self-control.

8. Try New Activities and Games

- [Giant List of Social Distancing Activities with Children](#)
- [Giant List of Enrichment Activities for Children](#)
- [Free Resources and Activities from PBS Kids](#)

9. Learn Online

- [Montessori at home](#) provides sample daily schedules and age-appropriate activities without screens for children aged toddler to adolescent.
- [Scholastic Classroom Magazines](#) is here to keep the learning going with special cross-curricular journeys.
 - Every day includes four separate learning experiences, each built around a thrilling, meaningful story or video. Kids can do them on their own, with their families, or with their teachers.
 - Just find your grade level and let the learning begin!
- [Khan Academy](#) is always free and provides high-quality educational content for kids (and adults) of all ages.
 - Created by experts, Khan Academy's library of trusted, standards-aligned practice and lessons covers math K-12 through early college, grammar, science, history, AP®, SAT®, and more. It's all free for learners and teachers.
- [PBS Learning Media](#) offers interactive lesson plans that meet standards from preschool all the way through high school.
 - In light of COVID-19, PBS Learning Media has curated a list of some of their best content to teach this spring and organized it by grade and subject area. The site includes videos, activities, and more to support learning at home.
- [Sporcle](#), "The World's Largest Trivia Quiz Website," has timed online quizzes on topics from sports to geography to music to movies to history, and more!
- [Coursera](#) has created an online forum for caregivers to share resources for learning at home
- [Smithsonian Lab](#) has distance learning resources on the natural world.

Ideas for Staying Connected with Your Loved Ones

Though meeting with your loved ones in person may be out of the question, there are many online platforms that offer ways to "hang out," free of charge. Some popular examples are [Skype](#), [FaceTime](#), [Google Hangouts](#), and [Zoom](#) (both free and paid plans available).

1. Invite a friend or family member to share a meal or tea over video chat!
2. Have a movie night. [Netflix Party](#) is a Google Chrome extension for watching Netflix remotely with others. It synchronizes video playback and adds group chat. Great for movie nights with friends or family members who you cannot visit in person right now.
3. Host a game night. Below is a list of games to play with friends and family while connected via video chat (or just with family members in the house):

Charades

- Number of players: at least 4 full participants. The more, the better.
- Materials: Pencils, scrap paper, timepiece.
- Rules: Players divide into two teams. Each team comes up with a list of words or phrases for the other team to act out. Players take turns trying to communicate, without talking, the assigned word or phrase within a limited period of time. Usually two or three minutes. The rest of the team tries to guess. No talking, no pointing at objects within the room (though you can point at someone who is on track for the right answer), and only those hand signals agreed upon by the group (hand signals for number of words, and syllables are common). The team with the best record of communicating in a given time wins.

Two Truths and a Lie

- Number of players: 2 or more
- Materials: none!
- Rules: One person lists three “facts” about him/herself. One of the “facts” should be false. Try to list the facts in an even voice, so as not to open a lie in advance. Other players try to guess which of the facts is false.

Last Letter

- Number of players: 2 or more
- Materials: none!
- Rules: The first player names a word on a given topic, the second player names a word which the first letter matches the last letter of the word named by the first player, and so on. Anyone who cannot come up with a word with the right letter for 30 seconds loses.

20 Questions

- Number of players: 2
- Materials: none!
- Rules: One person thinks of an object, and another person has 20 attempts to guess it. If you won (guessed the object for 20 questions), it's time for revenge! Now it's your turn to choose an object and your partner's turn to guess.

Accessing Financial and Food Resources

- If your employment has been affected by COVID-19, you can [apply](#) for unemployment benefits.
- MNsure is offering year-round enrollment for qualified individuals who are currently without insurance in response to the potential growth of [coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) cases.
- [Greater Twin Cities United Way](#) is providing immediate support to those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One important program is their 211 resource hotline, which connects people and families to critical resources such as food support, housing, child care, financial assistance and more, writes senior manager Liz Skree. “If you or someone you know is in need, dial 211 or text the letters MNCOVID to 898-211.”
- [NAMI Minnesota](#) is working to continue operations online — providing [online resources](#) for people experiencing isolation, anxiety, and other mental health related issues.
- There are multiple organizations in the Minnesota that are providing food to individuals affected by COVID-19 who are unable to visit grocery stores or are experiencing financial instability:
 - [Metro Meals on Wheels](#) is accepting new customers and people can [enroll in the service here](#). Meals are available on a short-term and long-term basis.
 - For those in Minneapolis who need assistance with daily meals, [House of Charity](#) offers [public meals throughout the day](#). The organization also offers support services related to housing and mental health.
 - You can find a list of restaurants that are providing free lunches to kids on [KSTP’s website here](#).
- If accessing internet is an issue: [Two Free Months of Comcast Internet Essentials for Low-income Households](#) or [Spectrum/Charter – free broadband/wifi for 60 days](#) or look for local free wi-fi spots: [Wi-Fi Free Spot](#)
- For more resources, visit <https://www.mncovidresponse.com/resources>