



LONG BEACH TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTER

Helping Children and Teens Cope with COVID-19

Model Good Coping

- Be sure to use strategies that increase your own psychological resilience, such as being patient with yourself as you adjust to this new situation, reminding yourself of your own strength and ability to survive stressful circumstances, getting enough sleep, and using online resources to help you cope, such as <https://istss.org/education-research/online-learning/free-recordings#Resilience> or free guided meditation sessions at www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations
- Evaluate whether you are modeling good coping skills to your children. If not, commit to improving your own coping behaviors.
- Describe to your children what you do to feel better (e.g., thinking of the positive side, distracting yourself with a pleasant activity, reminding yourself that you will get through this).
- Help children identify methods that help them feel better.

Find Small Ways to Make the Situation Positive in Some Way

- Devote your former commute time to spending extra play time with young children, completing art activities together, or engaging in activities with older youth.

Speak in Optimistic Ways About the Future

- Remind yourself and your children that this unusual time won't last forever.
- Speak about the things you will do in the future when this situation is over.
- Discuss the positive things you are learning with your children during this "safer at home" time and invite them to share any positive experiences, insights, or lessons learned.

Offer Realistic Reassurance

- No one can guarantee that someone will not become ill, but caregivers can point out the steps they are taking to maintain their and their family members' health and what they are doing to implement recommended precautions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spend more time doing things you always put off, such as organizing, pursuing hobbies, exercising, reading, engaging in mindfulness, or devoting time to spiritual activities. ▪ Offer to teach your children something that you never had time to teach them before. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caregivers can reassure their children that they [the caregivers] are committed to doing everything they can to keep themselves and the children safe.
<p style="text-align: center;">Provide Accurate and Age-Appropriate Information about the Virus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These are unusual events, so children and adolescents may not understand what is occurring or why adults are concerned. It is not helpful to deny that there is a public health issue, but it is also important not to amplify unhelpful anxiety. ▪ Be sure your children have accurate information by asking them what they have heard about COVID-19 or why people are staying home more often. Correct any misperceptions by providing accurate information (e.g., simple and brief for young children and more sophisticated for adolescents). ▪ End the discussion with a review of what can be done to promote health and reduce risks. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Allow Children to Express Their Feelings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth may respond to this situation with a wide range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, indifference, or even happiness about the changes in their daily obligations. Whatever their feelings, it is important to allow youth to express their feelings, without being corrected or criticized. ▪ Tell children and adolescents that it is normal to have all sorts of feelings during times like these. ▪ Let children know that you are available to talk to them about their feelings and that you are supportive of whatever emotions they are experiencing. ▪ Begin conversations with youth who may be reluctant to describe their feelings by briefly describing your own emotions. ▪ As another way to encourage conversation, ask older youth how their friends are feeling or responding to COVID-19-related changes.
<p style="text-align: center;">Maintain a Routine As Much as Possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping a schedule helps children feel reassured and helps maintain positive mood. ▪ Make a daily schedule with time for schoolwork, physical activity, meals, special family activities, and media time. ▪ Although bedtimes may be adjusted if youth do not have early-morning obligations, restrict the tendency for youth to stay up late and sleep all day. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Use Resources to Help Children Maintain Psychological Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)</i> https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf ▪ <i>Talking to Children about COVID-19 A Parent Resource.</i> https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/02292020_NASP_NASN_COVID-19_parent_handout.pdf

<p style="text-align: center;">Limit Media Exposure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is important to stay informed, but excessively watching coverage of the virus is not helpful for adults or children because it often increases anxiety without providing additional information. ▪ It is important to maintain a balanced focus that includes positive aspects of life rather than only COVID-19-related issues. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Help Children Feel in Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To the extent possible, help children and adolescents use problem-solving skills to address issues they are facing. For example, teach ways they can reduce the risk of contracting the virus, or help older youth plan an online gathering with friends to discuss a movie, show, or book. ▪ Provide opportunities for youth to control their own environments (e.g., making their daily schedules, taking turns choosing meal menus, choosing or voting on some family activities)
<p style="text-align: center;">Promote Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dance, run, walk, or do yoga at home. Now, you and your children may have more time to become active than you did before. Take advantage! 	<p style="text-align: center;">Stay connected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Within reason, allow youth to call, text, or use social media/online platforms to connect to their friends. ▪ Particularly for adolescents, it is important for them to maintain relationships with their social networks and reduce the sense of isolation that staying at home may cause.