

Parent/Caregiver Guide to Coping with the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Information & Communication

- Keep updated about what is happening with the outbreak and additional recommendations by getting information from credible media outlets and public health authorities (Huron County Public Health, CDC)
- Seek support and continued connections from friends and family by talking to them on the telephone, texting, or communicating through email or social media. Schools may have additional ways to stay in contact.
- Although you need to stay informed, minimize exposure to media outlets or social media that may promote fear or panic. Be aware of, and limit, how much media coverage and social media time your children are exposed to about the outbreak.
- Check in regularly with your children about what they have viewed on the Internet and clarify any misinformation
- Focus on supporting children by encouraging questions and helping them understand the current situation.
 - Talk about their feelings and validate these
 - Help them express their feelings through drawing or other healthy activities
 - Clarify misinformation about how the virus is spread
 - Provide comfort and a bit of extra patience
 - Check back in with your children on a regular basis or when the situation changes

Scheduling & Activities

- Keep your family's schedule consistent when it comes to bedtimes, meals, and exercise.
- Make time to do things at home that have made you and your family feel better in other stressful situations, such as reading, watching movies, listening to music, playing games, exercising, or engaging in religious activities from home.
- Have children participate in distance learning opportunities that may be offered by their schools or other institutions/organizations.
- Recognize that feelings such as loneliness, boredom, fear of contracting disease, anxiety, stress, and panic are normal reactions to stressful situations.

Self-care & Coping

- Modify your daily activities to meet the current reality of the situation and focus on what you can accomplish.
- Shift expectations and priorities to focus more on what gives you meaning, purpose, or fulfillment.
- Give yourself small breaks from the stress of the situation.
- Engage in fun and meaningful activities.
- Attempt to control self-defeating statements and replace them with helpful thoughts.
- Remember, you are a role model for your children. How you handle this stressful situation can affect how your children manage their worries.

Helping Children Cope

| Age Group | Reactions | How to Help |
|-----------|---|---|
| Preschool | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fear of being alone, bad dreams- Speech difficulties- Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting- Change in appetite- Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Patience and tolerance- Provide reassurance (verbal and physical)- Encourage expression through play, reenactment, storytelling- Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements- Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime- Maintain regular family routines- Avoid media exposure |

| Age Group | Reactions | How to Help |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| School-age (ages 6 – 12) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior - Clinging, nightmares - Sleep/appetite disturbance - Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) - Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest - Competition for parents' attention - Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patience, tolerance, and reassurance - Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and internet - Regular exercise and stretching - Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) - Participate in structured household chores - Set gentle but firm limits - Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community - Encourage expression through play and conversation - Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines - Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school - Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation |
| Adolescent (ages 13 – 18) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) - Sleep/appetite disturbance - Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy - Ignoring health promotion behaviors - Isolating from peers and loved ones - Concerns about stigma and injustices - Avoiding/cutting school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patience, tolerance, and reassurance - Encourage continuation of routines - Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force) - Stay in touch with friends through telephone, Internet, video games - Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors - Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school - Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak |

Seeking Additional Help

If you or a loved one is having a difficult time coping with the outbreak and want to seek outside help, there are ways to get that help.

- Huron County Support Line: 567-743-7155
- Huron County Crisis Hotline: 800-826-1306
- Crisis Text Line: Text 4HOPE to 741741
- Contact your physician or your insurance company (if they have a consultation line) to ask health related questions
- Contact local mental health and/or substance use providers to schedule an appointment. Appointments are now available over the phone or Internet.
 - Family Life Counseling 567-560-3584
 - Firelands Counseling 419-663-3737
 - Rigel Recovery Services 567-280-4023
- Additional resources can be accessed at:
 - www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html
 - huroncohealth.com
 - huroncountycovid.com
 - facebook.com/HuronCountyBoardofMentalHealth