



# Family Life Counseling and psychiatric services

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## Mental Health Tips for Children and Families to Survive COVID-19

Right now, many parents have the challenge of balancing work, child care, school work, self-care all while keeping anxieties-both yours and your children's- under control. We want you to know you are not alone. Follow the helpful tips below to help you and your children stay occupied, safe and healthy.



Make a schedule and stick to it. This doesn't have to be all business- or even exactly like your in-school schedules- but keeping a routine is good for your family's mental health and also keeps your children happier and on task. In your schedule, make sure to include the "have-to's" (school work, chores, quiet time, etc.) but put some fun things in there also, giving your kids something to look forward to. Family activities, game time and permission to watch TV can all be scheduled in to break up the not-so-fun tasks.



Studies show that as little as 30 minutes of quality one-on-one time with your children each day can reduce anxiety, negative behaviors and increase feelings of security, well-being and connectedness with their parents. Some studies even suggest children are more likely to listen to their parents after quality one-on-one activities. Need some ideas? Do morning family yoga, learn a new board game, make cookies, build something, put on a family talent/fashion show, go on a hike or allow your child to teach you about something he/she is interested in.



Manage your anxiety. We know you're worried, and that's completely natural! Your family is important to you, but how you deal with your own anxiety strongly impacts how your children are feeling. Children most often take cues from their parents when learning how to navigate a new situation. Be mindful of any "catastrophic thinking"- or dwelling on the worst case scenario. Remind yourself that your home is the safest place for you and your child right now, Your child has coughed and sneezed before this crisis began without being infected. Remind yourself that as long as you follow the rules, you family and children are safe in your care. You are doing everything you can.



Keep kids in the loop. Tell your children the real, simple truth. Your children know something significant is happening. Their whole world has been turned upside down. For children, knowing that something is happening, but not understanding, is often much more stressful than reality. Choose a calm and undistracted moment to explain to your child in words they understand. For example, you might say to a 3 year old "We can't go to the park for a while because, right now, a lot of people are getting sick and we are doing our very best to stay healthy." Older children can handle more detail. No matter their age, children will cope better if they have some understanding of the situation they find themselves living in.

Know that you do not have to survive this alone. We are all in this together.

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