

A Guide to Thrive

10 Strategies for Parents and Caregivers during COVID-19

1

Ensure children always have a supportive caregiver available. Children need care from a consistent, nurturing adult to make them feel safe and secure. If you are away from home, make sure they know you will spend time with them later and another trusted caregiver will watch them while you are gone.

2

Recognize stress and help children learn to manage stress. Children show stress in different ways. Some may be clingy or act out for extra attention; others may have trouble sleeping or eating. These reactions are to be expected. But children also need to learn to manage stress to stay emotionally healthy. Ask them about their feelings and help them practice different strategies for managing their stress, like deep breathing, exercising, or taking a break from the situation by going outside.

3

Reassure children that they are safe. Children need to hear that you, their other family members, and the community are working hard to keep them safe. Share positive stories of people working together and healing through challenges.

4

Provide age-appropriate information. Children have questions! It is better to provide them with age-appropriate information than to leave them with uncertainty and fear. For example, if a preschooler asks why they can't see their friends, you could say that right now all families are staying at home and spending time together to keep everyone healthy. Older children might benefit from more in-depth information about health and safety—both physical and emotional.

5

Teach children that they can help. Children want to feel some control over the situation. Teach them ways they can help, such as washing their hands for 20 seconds.

6

Maintain a routine. Routines provide children with stability and predictability. This should include their regular activities, such as going to bed or eating at the same time every day. Enlist children's help in following the routine and make routines fun, when possible! Consider designating a time each day to try a new activity together. Plan another time to do something your family already enjoys, like reading a favorite book. However, it is not necessary to schedule every moment of the day to provide an effective routine.

7

Keep children connected. Children don't need to feel alone even if they're separated from family and friends. Help them stay connected through letters and video or phone calls.

8

Seek professional help if needed. If children have ongoing challenges like nightmares, social withdrawal, extreme anger and aggression, or self-harm that don't get better with your support, reach out to a professional. Many can provide services over the phone or internet. See our online guide for helpful resources: <https://www.texprotects.org/get-help-resources/>.

9

Take care of yourself too! Keeping yourself mentally and physically healthy can help your children stay healthy too. Be kind and forgiving to yourself, do things you enjoy or take a break when you can, and stay connected with your friends, family, or mental health providers. It's a sign of strength to ask for help!

10

Explore resources available online. There are many resources available online to support parents through the pandemic. We compiled some of them in our Family Guide to Thrive here: <https://texprotects.blog/2020/03/26/covid-19-survival-kit/>.

Many of the ideas for this product were adapted from *Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic*: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

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