



INFORMATION ON PARENTING DURING COVID-19

Families around the world are adapting to the changes that are happening because of **Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)**. Many parents will find it stressful to balance work, caring for children, and maintaining the household, particularly when separated from their regular support networks. While isolation can represent an opportunity to spend time together and develop your relationship with your children, many caregivers will be experiencing conflicting feelings and priorities, as well as practical challenges.

The tips below are tools to help caregivers take care of their children, as well as their own wellbeing.

ABOUT YOU What might you be experiencing?

A global pandemic raises stress levels for everyone, including caregivers. If you are experiencing signs of stress, it is perfectly natural, and you are not alone.

Signs that you may be stressed include:

- A constant and compulsive need for updated **COVID-19** information leading to difficulty focusing on other topics;
- Poor concentration or ability to make decisions, large or small;
- Feeling overwhelmed, irritable or anxious;
- Experiencing disrupted eating and/or sleeping patterns.



Parenting can be challenging even on a good day, but during these challenging times it is crucial that you take steps to help yourself, your child, and your whole family get through this situation.

What can you do to help yourself?

Congratulations - you are taking the first step by recognizing that this is a challenging time with uncertainty and stress that must be managed. So, what can you do as a caregiver?

- Try to stay hopeful and positive - millions of others are feeling the way you are today.
- Look after yourself as much as possible - share childcare responsibilities with other adults isolating with you, set aside time for yourself to work or rest, and maintain your routines when you can.

- Keep life as close to your usual structure as possible. Maintain any spiritual, religious or cultural activities that you find comforting.
- Make a list of healthy coping skills for yourself and your family - avoid behaviours such as excessive alcohol drinking, online gambling, or taking drugs. Remember that negative coping mechanisms further compound your stress levels and can make your situation worse in the long run.



Now more than ever
Listening to children and youth
is the first step to help them
grow healthy and safe

For more parenting tips including from our partners in **WHO UNICEF CDC** and the partnership to end violence against children:
www.unodc.org/listenfirst



ABOUT YOUR CHILD What might your child be experiencing?

Children react to stress in many ways, and their reactions may vary depending on various factors, including age. Here are some signs:

- Some may initially be happy to be home, but over time the disruption to their routine, isolation from friends, and other imposed limitations will increase their stress.
- Children may experience ups and downs in their behaviours and their emotions may change. They may be unusually active, aggressive, quiet or sad.
- Children may express fear, become overwhelmed, and display anxiety. They may cry or become more clingy than usual. They may have disrupted sleep patterns.
- Children may become unwilling to participate in chores or schoolwork. They may also not get along so well with siblings and other family members.



Remember that it is understandable for children to react to stressful situations. It is important that you recognize their stress and console them as is age appropriate.

How can you help your child?

- Be affectionate with your child to reassure and comfort them while maintaining a positive relationship. Give them hugs or hold hands. Tell them you love them.
- Look for opportunities to praise your child when they have done something good, however small it may seem. The more you praise, the more likely they are to do it again!



- Ensure you have engaging activities to keep children meaningfully occupied. Children cope better when they help others and are busy.

- Be patient with your child and try not to criticise a change in behaviour, a desire for reassurance, or a complaint of being bored or not having anything to do.
- Explain to children and adults that the changed situation makes everyone's use of **"kind words and voices"** all the more important. This is especially true when voices rise or criticism starts to escalate.
- Pay attention to how your child is feeling. Listen to them and acknowledge how hard this time is.
- If you notice that children have an increased sense of anxiety or worry, ask them about their feelings. Understanding their feelings helps you to reassure and comfort them.

- Give children accurate information about what is happening, but do not overwhelm them. Be cautious of what you watch or discuss around your children.
- Encourage your child to play. Play is very important in helping children work through stress and worries. It helps them to maintain some normality in their lives.

- Maintain everyday routines (such as bed times and family meals) as much as you can, while also considering initiating new family activities (such as cooking or drawing together).



- Build in time for daily exercise for all family members.
- For all children, but especially older children, try to create a space alone or away from others, even for a short amount of time each day.



- If you can, stay connected with family and friends through the internet or phone/video calls.
- Support your child by helping them stay safe online.