



Work Life Services Newsletter August 2021

Call our toll-free number 1-800-364-6352 for assistance

Helping Your Child Cope with the Pandemic

Your child's world has changed in many ways because of the pandemic. Children may now need to socially distance from friends, remotely attend school, or virtually celebrate major life events like birthdays and graduations. These changes—and the uncertainty of more—can take a toll on a child's mental health. Read on to learn how you can help your child cope better with the stress of the pandemic.

Cultivating coping skills

Every child reacts differently to stress. Your child's response depends partly on their age and their ability to handle stressful events. It also depends on you. Children very often take cues from their parents and other grown-ups around them on how to react in certain situations. Do your best to stay calm and confident. This will help encourage the same in your kids. Taking care of your own mental health can give you the tools you need to be a positive role model for your family.

Here are some other ways you can help your child cope with stress during the pandemic:

- **Be ready to talk—and listen.** Children may have many questions about COVID-19 and other aspects related to the pandemic. Keep your responses simple, honest, and age appropriate. Stress safety and stability whenever you can. You can find more tips for talking with children on the [CDC website](#).
- **Check in regularly with your child.** Ask them how they feel, doing so can help you spot problems before they become serious. Try giving your child creative ways, like drawing or painting, to express their emotions.
- **Cut back on the news.** Letting a child watch or read too much about the pandemic can increase a child's anxiety levels. Try to set limits.
- **Create some structure.** Not going to school every day may leave a child feeling lost. To give some direction, add structure to their day. Ask your child to help you with planning. Along with time for schoolwork, be sure to include periods for play and relaxation. Keep in mind that younger children may need more frequent breaks.

- **Maintain old routines as much as possible.** For example, try to make sure your child still goes to bed and wakes up at the same time each day.
- **Play together.** Set aside meaningful family time. Choose activities everyone can enjoy, such as biking, cooking, or playing video or board games. Keeping social distancing in mind, get active outside for some fresh air and a change of scenery when possible.
- **Keep your family connected.** To prevent loneliness, encourage your child to virtually reach out to family members and friends through social media or with video chats, text messages, or phone calls.
- **Remind your child that they are not powerless.** Children can do a lot to protect themselves and those they love, like wearing a mask, washing their hands often, and socially distancing.

Spotting signs of distress

It's normal for children to feel unsafe, anxious, lonely, and even bored right now. They may grieve over the loss of spending time with friends or not being able to participate in after-school activities like sports. But some behavior may indicate a more serious problem, such as depression or an anxiety disorder. Watch for these common signs of distress in your child:

- Being very worried or sad
- Crying a lot or being clingy
- Resorting to past behaviors they already grew out of, like bedwetting or throwing temper tantrums
- Not eating or sleeping well
- Acting out toward family and friends
- Having trouble with school
- Having problems focusing
- Being very tired all the time
- Not doing activities they once enjoyed
- Complaining about headaches, an upset stomach, or other physical symptoms with no known cause
- Using tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs

If you are concerned about your child's behavior, talk with your child's healthcare provider right away. Your child's provider can screen for mental health problems like depression, anxiety, or substance abuse. You can also find helpful resources near you by visiting the [National Institute of Mental Health's website](#).