

Mental Health and Wellness Tips for Families

Stick to a routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time. Create a schedule that is varied and includes time for learning, work and self-care.

Hygiene is important. Shower or bathe every day. Wash your face and brush your teeth. Wear bright colors to enhance your mood.

Go outside. Try to spend at least 30 minutes outside every day. Concerned about contact? Try first thing in the morning or later in the evening, and avoid traveled streets and avenues. If you are high-risk or are living with someone that is, open the windows and blast the fan. Fresh air can have a positive impact on feelings.

Move your body. If you aren't comfortable going outside, search YouTube for free movement videos, or turn up the volume and have a dance party!

Reach out. Connect with others for support. Don't forget to do this for your children - they miss their friends too. Setup daily virtual play-dates with friends using technology.

Stay hydrated and eat well. Drink plenty of water, eat nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something new. This is an activity the whole family can enjoy.

Play. Children often communicate how they are feeling through play. You may see themes of illness, doctor visits and isolation. Play is healthy for children and adults, helping to problem-solve and process the world around them.

Give space and time. This time without a traditional routine can be difficult. We must try to move with empathy and understanding through the challenging moments. Remind yourself that everyone is doing the best they can.

Create a private or quiet place for each family member. It is important that everyone has a separate space for work and relaxation. Help children identify a place to retreat when they need downtime. Together, create a cozy space using blankets, pillows, cushions, scarves, beanbags, tents and handmade forts.

Be flexible. In our new situation, there is no road map. Be kind and take time to adjust.

Be gentle. We are all struggling with disruption in routine, especially children, who rely on them for safety and security. Expect increased anxiety, worries, fears, nightmares, difficulty separating or sleeping, testing limits and meltdowns. Find ways to build on your emotional connection.

Focus on safety and family connection. Try to remember that these are scary and unpredictable times for us all. Focus on strengthening your connection through time spent together, play, books, and verbal reassurances that you are there for them.

Limit COVID conversation, particularly around children. Information is readily available and changes rapidly, leaving some of us scared and overwhelmed. Find a couple of trusted sources that you can check regularly, limiting the times per day and time spent researching. Always remember that children see and hear everything, and do not have the ability to process and place information into context. They need to know that you are able to continue to care for them and keep them safe.

Notice the good in the world - the helpers. There are great stories of people sacrificing, donating, and supporting one another. Try reading some positive information to balance the sadness.

Help others. Find ways, whether big or small, to give to others. Helping others can give you a sense of purpose when things seem out of our control.

Find a project and have some fun. Try a puzzle, start a game of Risk, paint a picture, read a Harry Potter book, binge watch a show, crochet a blanket or solve a Rubik's Cube. Stay busy and engaged as a distraction from the outside world.

Find lightness and humour in each day. Balance the worry you may be feeling with some humour and comedic relief.

Remember: This is temporary. It can be challenging to think of the road ahead. Remind yourself that although this is scary and difficult, it will pass. Soon you will feel free, safe, busy, and connected again.

**As always, be kind to yourself and others.
We are all in this together.**