

COVID-19: SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND TEENS



OFFER REASSURANCE

It's okay if you don't have all the answers - being available is what matters. Focus on what you're doing to stay safe - social distancing, covering mouths when coughing and noses when sneezing, and washing hands often.

KEEP A ROUTINE

Routines are very important for children and adolescents. Forced isolation and school closures disrupt usual routines, so do your best to create a new one. Ideas include doing virtual schoolwork, finding time to play and exercise, keeping in touch with friends and family remotely, and maintaining regular mealtimes and bedtimes.



HELPING OUT

Asking your child to complete age-appropriate tasks can help them feel in control during times of uncertainty. Younger children can help with chores and older children can help care for younger children. Pointing out all the helpers - doctors, nurses, scientists working on a vaccine - can provide children with reassurance.



LISTEN TO THEIR WORRIES

During times of stress or crisis, it is natural for children and teens to worry about how they or their loved ones could be affected. Give your child space to talk about what they've heard and how they're feeling.



SELF CARE FOR PARENTS

In order to be physically and emotionally present for your children, you need to take care of yourself. Try to get good sleep, eat healthy foods, and move your body. Reach out to others for support and limit your time online or watching the news. Take time to do activities or hobbies that you enjoy.



TALK IT OUT

Keep explanations simple, age-appropriate, and avoid volunteering excessive information or detail. Speak in a calm and reassuring tone. If you're feeling anxious, take time to calm down first before having a conversation or answering their questions. Let your children know you will continue to update them as you learn more.



BY JOY D. OSOFSKY, PH.D. & HOWARD OSOFSKY, M.D., PH.D.

LSU Health
NEW ORLEANS