

Family Approach to Wellbeing

Mind Your Stress



Parents, go easy on yourselves as you adapt to balancing new priorities and demands. Take time for your own daily #selfcare.

Maintain a regular routine. Include family meals, playtime (aka recess), and worktime - that may include creative pursuits like art, reading, or music.

Create space for mindfulness. Designate family time to meditate or practice yoga.

Limit screen time. Always recommended for children's development and health, but is particularly crucial now when emotionally disturbing stories and images are broadcasted in increased frequency.

Note about stress in children:

Be mindful that new physical symptoms (e.g. stomachaches or headaches), changes in sleep patterns, cognitive disturbances (e.g. inattention), or acting out of emotions (e.g. agitation) can all be signs of stress in children. Children can also regress in milestones, such as bedwetting after a period of being potty trained. Consider a call to a medical professional for any concerning behavior or new complaint.



Healthy Eating

Involve children in meal preparation. Children creatively involved are more likely to then enjoy their product. It's also a great way to spend time together!

Allow creative play with food. Create a face on a plate with a variety of raw vegetables or fruits. Consider cooking competitions - split the family into two teams and see who can come up with the best dish using healthy ingredients. Give extra points for creative food displays!

Avoid highly processed foods. Reduce or eliminate fast food or refined sugar products.



Activity

Engage in exercise together. Family games and activities can be used to encourage children to express their emotions through play. Create a family dance party or ask a child to lead a yoga or stretching class.

Go outdoors. Socially distanced walks, a dose of fresh air, and sunshine are good for immunity while maintaining a 6 foot distance from others and avoiding public surfaces including playground equipment



Quality Sleep

Prioritize calming activities before bedtime. These include reading, guided imagery, mindfulness, or simple boardgames.

Depending on the age, **children may need up to 10-14 hours of sleep a day** including naps. Increased stress can elicit feelings of fatigue so allow children to rest when tired.

Adults should aim to get their needed eight **(8) hours of sleep every night**; a brief afternoon nap may be just the thing to refresh and recharge for the evening!



Connectivity

Hold honest discussions to share emotions. Answer questions for children. This can help children process the reality and feel safe to express how they feel. It helps build their emotional intelligence for the long-term.

Engage in age-appropriate coping strategies. Young children may use play or drawing to express emotions, whereas older children may wish to verbalize or write/journal about their reflections.

Use video chat platforms. Allow children to connect with other family members, especially if they are hospitalized or ill loved ones.

Strongly prioritize debriefing. When a child is ready (perhaps hours later), any emotional events like talking to ill loved ones, others who have died, or disturbing images on the news.



When in need, contact a family physician or pediatrician for guidance and support as many are providing telehealth services.

Reliable family resources:

The American Academy of Pediatrics
Healthychildren.org

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Sesame Street in Communities

Get the facts from governmental resources:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

