

How to Support Your Child's Social, Emotional and Behavioral Health

We know you and your child may be experiencing stress, confusion, fear or anxiety during this time. Below are some steps you can take to support your child.

- **Talk to Your Child about the Current Situation.** Have age-appropriate conversations with your child and be sure all adults in the household are using the same language to describe what is happening. Be sure you understand the correct facts from medical and government resources. Share only developmentally appropriate facts with your child (see the links below for ideas about how to do this). Be calming to avoid cultivating anxiety or distress in your child.
- **Limit Exposure.** Be mindful of adult conversations or media coverage about what is happening. Limit your child's exposure to these as they could cause an increase in anxiety or distress in your child.
- **Encourage Expressive Activities.** Encourage imaginative and expressive activities that can help your child share how he or she is feeling (for example, play for younger children and music activities, art activities and journaling for older children). This will allow your child to process his or her emotions in safe and productive ways.
- **Create a Structured Environment.** Provide structure and routine for your child. Have a daily schedule with general activities posted in the home. Visual schedules are beneficial for young children. Children do well and feel safer when they know what to expect next.
- **Set Expectations.** Set expectations for your child to complete a set amount of academic work daily. This helps with structure but also will help avoid the pressures of feeling behind when he or she returns to school.
- **Create Special Time.** Set aside at least 10 minutes a day to focus on your child. More time is better. Actively listen to what he or she says and stay positive. If your child is younger, play with him or her during this time. Child-focused play has many benefits to child-adult relationships.
- **Spend Quality Time Together.** Have dinner together. Put away all technology. Take turns sharing something that you felt happy about today. Your child can help with preparation and clean up.
- **Stay Active.** Encourage your child to play, walk or hike outdoors and get outside with your child as well. If the weather does not allow for outdoor time, try yoga, having a dance party or watching online videos that encourage movement indoors.
- **Focus on the Positive.** Point out the "helpers" in the world and the good things they are doing. Stay simple and limit detail about anything frightening, but emphasize the good work being done.
- **Model Responses to Difficult Situations.** The adult should care for him or herself and model this for the child. Children will watch how adults in their homes deal with stress and replicate this themselves.