Helpful Ideas and Resources for Families with Children

Try to stay calm and positive! Remember that children take their cues from us. You may have heard the term co-regulation. Children learn to regulate their emotions from observing and experiencing the emotions of others. If you can be calm and playful, they can too!

Limit access to news! While it is tempting to watch the local and national news reports about the current threat to public health, our children are not prepared to handle the onslaught of sensationalized coverage. It is important to limit their access and provide age appropriate, fact-based information that helps them understand the current situation. We do want them to understand the importance of washing their hands and keeping a safe distance from others. We do not want them to panic if they develop a cold or allergies.

Maintain a regular and consistent schedule and routine! While school is out and your normal workday may be disrupted it is still important that children have consistency to their day.

- Maintain the morning readiness routine of breakfast, toothbrush, washing, dressing etc.
- Set up a schedule for getting the schoolwork done, designate a work space – even your 3-5 year old child is used to a schedule if they attend a pre-school or early learning center and you can re-create this at home *
- Be sure to include time for outdoor play breaks and nutritious snacks. (Some schools/towns have locations with subsidized meal distribution for children on the lunch program.) Project Bread’s FoodSource Hotline 1-800-645-8333 is available to all MA residents!
- Maintain the usual school day rules regarding T.V. / video games / screen time etc.
- Honor your usual bedtime routine.

Children need structure and consistency in their day!

Engage children in Mindfulness Breaks! To help children calm down join them in a simple meditation. Meditation can take many forms, including an active meditation where you and your child take a walk outside and challenge yourself to walk slowly and notice as much as you can along the way. Count how many shades of green you see; how many birds; how many different types of trees; listen to the sounds, what do you hear; how does the air feel against your face?

Find more meditations for children https://chopra.com/articles/3-kid-friendly-meditations-your-children-will-love

Join them for some fun! Your kids will want your time and attention. While you may be working from home or preoccupied with the business of keeping your household safe and running smoothly, you will benefit from a play break too. Try some coloring or drawing! Add music! Have a silly dance party!

Here is a link to web site that offer ideas and links to other free resource for things to do with children at home. It offers a mix of educational and entertainment options for all ages. http://Everclevermom.com/2020/03/covid19-camp-free-resources-to-educate-and-entertain-your-kids-during-quarantineEverclevermom.com/2020/03/covid19-camp-free-resources-to-educate-and-entertain-your-kids-during-quarantine
www.scholastic.com/learnathome is another good option.

Unfortunately, this is NOT a time for playdates or socializing, if it can be avoided. We know that some families are banding together to provide childcare for those parents who must get to work. Please remind children to wash hands frequently, avoid sharing food and drink, and keep as much distance as possible. This may be tough. Know that you are doing your best under trying circumstances!

Dealing with Your Child’s Worry

So how do you help a child who is already anxious about the current pandemic?

**Do talk about it.** Ask them what they know about Coronavirus and how they are feeling about what’s going on and let them know it’s ok to be scared. Also remind them that it’s ok if they don’t feel like talking about it. Your job is to be available and to let them know you are doing everything you can to keep them safe.

**Be prepared.** Talk about the precautions you are taking as a family to limit your exposure, and how you want them to behave in public should you need to go out. Talk about what you will do if someone in the family shows symptoms of illness.

**Inform and protect.** Local and national news reports can frighten and overwhelm children, especially when repeated throughout the day. Talk about what they already know or have heard. It’s best to watch together and discuss the reality. Younger children should be kept away from the media coverage, as it may be too hard to understand.

**Ask questions.** Inquire about what your children have heard or what they know. Encourage them to ask questions, and answer them in a straightforward and age appropriate way. If you don’t know the answers, tell them you’ll do your best to find out.

**Allow them some control.** Children, much like us, may be feeling helpless and frustrated. Let them make whatever choices you can about games, music, activities, snacks etc. Find a job and put them in charge.

**Keep calm.** If you can keep your own worries in check, they will feel safer and calmer too. Remember, they can notice your tension and they can overhear your conversations more than you might think.

**Note any changes.** There is no way to sugar coat it, this global pandemic can be very scary for kids. You may see changes in behavior; younger children may become clingy or teary, while older kids may become angry and push you away.
WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M FEELING worried?

Circle of Support
1. Talk about how you are feeling with the people you trust at home.
2. If you have questions, ask the people you trust to help you understand.
3. Keep in touch with friends, even if you're not seeing them at school every day.
4. Video chat or call loved ones who don't live near you.

Breathe it Out
If your body is feeling restless or keyed up, take some time to sit and slow your breathing. Try these easy exercises by tracing your finger over the lines and breathing along with them. Repeat at least 5 times!

Set Small, Daily Goals
Keep your focus on real things you can do! Set small, daily goals for yourself and keep track of your goals. Set a goal about how much you will read each day, how long you'll practice your free throws each day, how many nice things you'll say to your family members each day, or something else that's important to you!

Look for the Fun
Shift your focus away from the worries and do something fun!
1. Play a board game with your family.
2. Have a dance party.
3. Paint, draw, write, or create!

Let the Worries Go
Having trouble letting go of the worries? Try these strategies:
1. Set a 3-minute timer. During those 3 minutes, think about the worries all you want. When the timer goes off, worry time is over! Get up, move to a new space, and think of something else!
2. Write your worries on a piece of paper. Tear or wad it up and toss it in the trash can.

Remember, it's okay to have worries. Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling!
SO YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS ABOUT Coronavirus

What is Coronavirus?
Coronavirus or COVID-19 is a virus that affects the respiratory system (lungs, nose, mouth, throat, bronchi, and all other body parts involved in breathing). It is passed from person to person through droplets from sneezes, coughs, runny noses, and saliva. So if someone sneezes on their hand and touches a bathroom door handle, and then another person touches that same bathroom door handle and then touch their face, they can become infected with the virus. This is why it is so important to wash our hands and avoid touching our faces!

I'm a kid. Doesn't that mean I can't get Coronavirus?
No. Some people have been saying that kids aren't affected by Coronavirus. Scientists believe that Coronavirus may not make kids as sick as adults. But kids can still become infected with the virus.

Why are we staying home from school?
All of the adults at school want you and your family to be safe and healthy. Scientists are recommending that we stay home and avoid being in crowds or large gatherings (like a classroom full of friends!). We are staying home from school to slow the virus from spreading.

What should I do to stay safe?
1. Wash your hands often and before you eat. Wash them for at least 20 seconds and make sure you get the space in between your fingers and the backs of your hands clean!
2. Try to avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes, and whole face with unwashed hands.
3. Practice healthy habits! Eat healthy foods, drink lots of water, get some exercise, and get plenty of sleep.
4. If you need to sneeze or cough, sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
5. Follow directions from the trusted adults in your life. They want to take care of you!