

Well-Being in a Pandemic Resource List

FACE COVID: How to Respond Effectively to COVID by Russ Harris:

<https://www.actmindfully.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FACE-COVID-eBook-by-Russ-Harris-March-2020.pdf>

Mindfulness Resources

Apps:

Calm, Headspace, Smiling Mind, My Life

Books

True Refuge by Tara Brach

Peace is Every Step and The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh

Wherever You Go There You Are by Jon Kabat-Zinn

When Things Fall Apart by Pema Chodron

Real Love: The Art of Mindful Connection by Sharon Salzberg

Resilient by Rick Hanson

Websites

www.doasone.com

www.mindful.org

Loving Kindness

<https://www.tarabrach.com/heart-meditation-loving-kindness/>

<https://www.mindful.org/loving-kindness-takes-time-sharon-salzberg/>

Article on Grief We are Feeling:

<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>

Children's Resources are Attached separately

Please email if you have any questions: Amy Hoch at hoch@rowan.edu

Be Well!



COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT - GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS & CARETAKERS

Concrete Caretaker Actions to Reassure Children and Adolescents

This global crisis is sure to test our strengths and expose our vulnerabilities. For children and adolescents, this period will have an indelible impact on their developing brains and world view. As we shift from functioning within relative certainty to shaping our lives around a frightening new reality with an uncertain end date, we have a tremendous opportunity to promote grit, build resilience, model community responsibility and service, and attend to both the needs and wants of the self and the needs of others.



Other-care and self-care can co-exist and practicing this balance gives us an opportunity to experience ways in which other-care is self-care. We grow when we practice empathy and expand our awareness to the needs and feelings of those around us.

This national challenge presents us with an opportunity to shrink or grow; how we handle it both impacts and shapes children's brain. As we decide 'what to do with it,' we are actively charting a path for brains under construction and awaiting instruction.

TIME TO REASSURE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

ROUTINE

Opportunity: *Routines and structured work and play offer a sense of security, productivity & predictability.*

Structure weekdays as close to your child's typical school week as possible. Create a developmentally appropriate and child-centered weekly schedule to include:

- ✓ wake time
- ✓ learning time
- ✓ mealtimes
- ✓ family or parent-child time for emotional check-in, debriefing the day and planning for tomorrow.
- ✓ brain breaks (solo activity or rest)
- ✓ unstructured active play or art time (kid-choice)
- ✓ semi-structured play time outside (adult-choice) (i.e., sport, game with movement, walking, running, biking).
- ✓ device-free and quiet transition to end the day
- ✓ set school week and weekend bedtimes

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Dr. Jennifer Shaw, Founding Partner, Gil Institute for Trauma Recovery and Education, LLC



Expect routine while soliciting your child's ideas about activities within each domain. This is a time to emphasize that activities we *want to do* follows activities we *need to do*. This fosters a sense of responsibility, work ethic, self-discipline, and earning what we want by doing what we need.

EXPERT EDUCATION

Opportunity: *Practice Distinguishing Uninformed Opinions from Expert Sources of Information*

Limit and filter information to children's developmental age and within their capacity to cope with anxiety-producing situations. Local and State governments as well as CDC and NIH information sites are the best sources for status and guidance. Last month, fake news was annoying. This month, fake news is potentially lethal. Given the national and political climate, this crisis is an excellent opportunity to teach critical thinking and evaluating whether information we get is motivated by something other than the truth.

Older children and adolescents may prefer peers or social media as primary sources and need parents to provide accurate information from adult experts. However, news can be overwhelming and frightening for children.

Limit updates to an overview of risks and precautions, and a longer summary of all the ways we are adjusting and ways in which our community is working hard to help and protect us. Guide children toward an authoritative science-based source and model fact-checking. Inform briefly and move on to the present "small, safe and predictable world" of the child and family.

AVAILABILITY FOR EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

Opportunity: *My parent(s) can actively listen and understand my feelings and needs are important, too.*

Children have a unique perspective and may not share their interpretation of the world around them, or their curiosities or fears, when their adult helpers appear unavailable or disinterested. Adults too often wait for children to lean in and use them as a resource while children wait for full attention followed by a direct invitation and an atmosphere that values their emotional experience.

Current events and collective fears can be used as an opportunity to postpone advice-giving or 'teaching moments' to first listen and wait to be asked a question. The more we listen without correction, the more likely they will lean in now and in the future. Just like adults, children need to feel heard and understood so that adult guidance feels specific to them and informed by their needs and emotional experience. When we wait, they wait. When we talk before listening, they tune out and lean out.



SOCIALLY CONNECT WHILE PHYSICALLY DISTANCING

Opportunity: *We are healthier, safer, and happier when we participate in relationship.*

Distancing physically and connecting socially are concurrent priorities to protect both physical and emotional health and will buffer the impact of chronic stress. Parent-approved and monitored social media are tools that can help older children and adolescents maintain some normalcy; peer connection is an important daily routine. Just like adults, friends are supports and their world needs to remain as much the same as possible.

Face to face connections (FaceTime, video chats, etc.) can temporarily replace group gatherings. Allow as much appropriate face-to-face contact through devices as possible.

Allow as much privacy between your child and friends as you can. If they were together physically, you would not be invited to monitor the conversation. Parents are not often invited to ‘hang out’ when kids are talking with each other in school or outside the home; they will want the same privacy with peers and groups you have already approved.

SOLICIT CHILDREN’S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Opportunity: *I am a unique and valuable person (now); I can positively influence my community (later).*

Children are watching and listening. They are experts of their own experience. We observe and interpret but they have the information. Ultimately, they decide whether or not they are willing to trust us with their story based on our responses along the way. We must first prove we can listen without judgement and demonstrate unconditional interest and love.

Invite and then allow children and adolescents to talk freely about all the feelings they have. It can be tempting to “teach” or lecture, but your child may tune you out if he or she does not feel understood or respected as an equally impacted citizen-in-training. Start with questions about what they think, feel, perceive and then demonstrate willingness to adapt after hearing their experience and needs.

UNDERScore SELF/OTHER-CARE BALANCE

Opportunity: *I am safe, healthy, and satisfied today if I take care of myself first and last...*

I am safe, healthy, and happy tomorrow if I take care of myself first and others next.

Underscore the need for both self-care and other-care and explain ways in which these approaches to life and career can intersect. The COVID-19 crisis requires us to think as much about ourselves as about our family and our community. Children will take our cues as directions for how to interact with the world now and later; to isolate and self-preserve or take good care of self in order to better engage and contribute to the preservation of family and community.



Given what we do or don't do directly impacts the lives of those around us, today is an opportunity for children and adolescents to practice flexibility, compassion, and witness the protective influence of other-care and empathy-driven community engagement.

RESILIENCE

Opportunity: *I have the capacity to adapt, when I challenge myself or the world challenges me.*

Resilience is available and awaiting opportunities to surface and strengthen. Resilience does not mean invulnerable or immune to stress or emotional difficulty; it is the capacity to move forward courageously when vulnerable, or when stressed, or when we get up after falling and resting awhile. It's the getting up and trying again, not the surrendering in despair that defines us. This is available to us all but does not happen without encouragement and practice and, for children, does not develop without example.

Children are naturally and incredibly resilient. In the field of childhood trauma, we find this is too heavily relied upon. We tend to assume their innate capacity for adaptation under extreme stress or trauma will allow children to physically and psychologically survive. This is true, but survival is only the first step. When we act aggressively as active and resourceful allies, children can more quickly move from surviving to thriving. Resilience is the primary ingredient for adaptation and growth, but it can neither be fully tapped nor strengthened without at least one reliable, steady, and nurturing ally.

EMPATHY

Opportunity: *Boost emotional intelligence; practice managing your emotions while considering the perspective and feelings of another.*

Threats to safety and security ignite a self-preservation neurobiological response. We are hard wired to first attend to our own survival needs. Currently, prioritize "settling in" to the new normal and taking active steps to establish expectations and a routine for yourself, your home, and your children. Then, take steps to have children imagine the experience of others. It's an opportunity to teach we are more similar than we are different. Adult modeling of interest and care about another's needs is how empathy is taught to children.

Let "what do we need?" be followed by "what might others who have less or more vulnerable need from us?" In the coming days and weeks, there will be opportunities to safely serve others. Work as a family to explore the needs of your community and have your child dedicate part of their week to community health needs. Unfortunately, we are going to be flooded with opportunities to put our wants and needs aside for the sake of others. In addition to their online academics, this crisis offers us an opportunity to model how to live a healthy and fulfilling life regardless of circumstance.... physically, mentally, and psychologically.



COVID-19 CRISIS COPING- GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS & CARETAKERS

Practical Measures to Preserve and Protect Children's Brain and Body Health



As we all work together to adjust to the new reality of the COVID-19 threat, structuring children's daily and weekly schedule in a way that maintains as many routines as possible will be critical to ensuring continuity in their development, and buffer the impact of chronic stress on a developing brain.

Children can be empowered by us asking for their ideas about how to incorporate the basics into brain and body health practices. These events can leave children feeling powerless and needing a sense of control over their lives, too. The more they participate, the more likely they are to invest.

As we implement best practice for protecting ourselves and containing the spread of this virus, it can be helpful to think in terms of protecting children from both physical illness and the effects of chronic stress. When setting up expectations and structure for your child's day at home, ask them to fill in their ideas of how to attend to each of the following domains of brain and body health and hygiene.

HYGIENE =

A SERIES OF PRACTICES PERFORMED TO PRESERVE HEALTH

1. EMERGENCY HYGIENE PRECAUTIONS

Expect all family members to follow all CDC COVID-19 specific precautions, to include:

- Extended and frequent handwashing
- Use hand sanitizer as a secondary defense with prolonged hand washing as primary
- Wash your face with soap and water throughout the day and after contact with a new person
- Refrain from touching your face
- Limit touching surfaces outside the home and wash hands immediately when unavoidable
- Daily showers
- Brush your teeth after each meal
- Avoid crowded areas
- Maintain at least two arm's length distance from others outside the home



2. SLEEP HYGIENE

Prioritize good sleep hygiene by enforcing consistent “settle in, device-free” bedtime routines.

Sleep hygiene is our best defense against chronic or toxic stress (brain health) and environmental toxins (body health). Solid uninterrupted sleep allows the body and mind to reset and refuel; build up a reserve for our immune system; fight infection; process and store new learning; process and make meaning of events and psychological conflicts, and to release tension. During high stress times, think of sleep as a circuit breaker and follow the recommended hours as if they were “shut off to reset or reboot” instructions for the home or computer.

Whatever tensions or emotions we have at the start of sleep come with us when we drift off, which can cause sleep disruption or nightmares. When we first settle our minds (turn down lighting and remove noise and conversation (stimulation)), we are setting up sleep for a full and successful reset. Meditation and soft music can also calm both brain and body during this wake-sleep transition. Set up a routine designed to take calm, not stress, into your overnight reset.

Establish and enforce a bedtime routine for kids and teenagers that starts with a quiet activity. Set a ‘lights out; devices off’ bedtime expectation. Adolescents need as much sleep as younger children; their sleep-wake cycle is different (later bedtime; later wake time) but a consistent sleep routine and schedule is just as important. Guidelines below are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

AGE	HOURS
Toddlers	11-14
Preschoolers	10-13
School-age (6-12 years)	9-12
Adolescents	8-10
Adults	7+

3. BODY HYGIENE

The unstructured days to come may make it hard to maintain daily hygiene. Set the same expectation as you would for a school day to maintain basic grooming and hygiene. This should include getting up and dressed/clean for the day before starting the learning part of the day (“school” remains their day job). This good habit is recognized as a staple for successful and healthy adults. For kids, good habits later in life are best established as early as possible and is not likely to occur if parents do not expect them to practice.



4. BRAIN HYGIENE

Stress interferes with healing and recovery and reduces immune system potential.

Art, movement, laughter, and play reduces stress and strengthens our immune system! Build in time for “free art” and “free play.” “Free” activities are those that a child chooses without adult directions or instructions.

Adults can help by providing materials and leaving them to either create on their own or to invite your engagement. Think of unstructured time or “free play” as an opportunity for children to work out problems and explore solutions on their own. Adults too often get in the way of this process by wanting to “help” or “teach.”

Structured play and adult-led activities (i.e., sport, board games, art projects, a playful parent) can promote family health and foster a child’s experience of the home as a safe and secure respite from external stress, and their experience of the parent as capable of putting down worries and making time for fun and family connection.

5. SOCIAL HYGIENE

Expect older children and adolescents to prioritize friend relationships and to feel eager to connect with their peers in some way, and often. They are more likely to invest in family time when their social world is maintained. Remember, they need peer support as much as we do. As kids get older, parents are resources and protectors while friends increasingly become emotional lifelines. Their expressed urgency to do so is more a developmental need than a desire.

Adolescents are not always rejecting you or avoiding family connection; they are biologically driven to prepare for leaving the home and family to launch into adulthood. They need guardrails during this transition but think of the urgency (and all the challenging ways they express it!) as preparation for being on their own. During this period of fear and uncertainty, the “need” will want to be met by connecting to their peer world with a device. They do need limits and breaks so there is enough time for other brain and body health needs, and they start to practice balance.

6. SCREEN HYGIENE

Older children will want more screen time and feel excited about the opportunity to spend more time doing the things they like. Try and relax screen time “rules” to allow for kids to do more of what they enjoy, combatting the stress that they are under. While we are all aware of the risks of ‘too much’ screen time, loosening the time restrictions makes sense under these circumstances.



You can strengthen your relationship by ‘doing’ as much as by talking. Show interest in their favorite games and ask them to show you what they like about that game, or to show you how to play. They just may invite you into their game world if they are sure you want to enter just to see what interests them and enjoy what they enjoy rather than criticize or judge the activity as unproductive. Just like adults, kids need something of their very own to look forward to during their “work/school” day.

7. EMOTIONAL HYGIENE

Play, laugh, connect and check in on the size and type of their unique ‘worries’

Big or small, we all need both space and grace at this time of disruption, uncertainty and anxiety. Emotions will run high and there will be friction and tension within the family system. A smooth transition or quick adjustment during this time would be abnormal!

Uncertainty gives way to rigidity; rigidity of one will increase tension for all. Anticipate frustration and conflict and prioritize time and space to adjust expectations. Life is different; flexibility and letting go can protect the psychological health of your family.

Without a balance between individual and ‘whole family’ needs and wants, inside can become as stressful as outside. When all members work to accept their own needs and wants cannot be met without compromise and deference to the ‘whole,’ you can set up this challenge for success and this crisis can be transformed into an opportunity for personal and family growth.

8. CARETAKER HYGIENE

Kids won’t get through this without you, so you’ll need to take lots of little brain and body breaks for your own self-care. Establish downtime or quiet time for your children, then model it by doing the same.

Schedule and model stress breaks or brain breaks to regroup, even if for short periods of rest or silence so your brain can make room to cope with the big and little ways children will express their needs and share or show their frustrations!

Take good care of each other and yourselves,

Dr. Jennifer Shaw and the Gil Institute Family