



Helping your Child Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic

Children may be impacted by the pandemic in a number of ways. It is important to remember that children don't have to know someone who is ill to be stressed. The fear of being infected, or having parents or loved ones being ill, or seeing media coverage of the pandemic may lead to some common and predictable reactions. Many reactions will get better naturally with extra support. Parents and other caregivers play a key role in the recovery process. Many children's reactions are based on parents and care takers reactions. Remember to model healthy coping for children. Common reactions may include:

- Fear of the event happening again to them or their family
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Changes in eating habits
- Becoming irritable or angry in a way that is not typical for the child
- Mood changes that are not typical, like being much more emotional than usual
- Problems concentrating
- Expressing feelings about the pandemic in play or art
- Physical complaints like headaches or stomachaches
- Acting younger than before (regression)

Parents and caretakers play an important role in the support that is necessary for resilience. Children can and do "bounce back" from traumatic events. Below are a few ideas about how to help a child cope with their reactions to the pandemic:

- Discuss what is happening honestly, but simply. Avoid overwhelming with information
- Monitor children's reactions over time...they may change as time goes on
- Ask the child what they are thinking and feeling about what is happening
- Listening is key! Avoid discounting or minimizing feelings
- Let them know that it is ok to feel and react
- Maintaining a daily schedule while at home can help support and stabilize stress reactions Normal routines help
- Talking, writing, and art are ways children can express their reactions. Encourage this.
- Answer questions that your child asks in age appropriate ways
- Provide reassurance about fears/ safety. Remind them that what is being done to keep them safe and encourage them to do the things are recommended to have an active role in protecting themselves (depending on their age and ability)
- Remind your child that this is not an everyday event and that there are people who help make the community safe (First responders, Healthcare professionals, etc.)
- Monitor and limit your child's exposure to media coverage of the event
- If you have concerns about your child's reaction to this event, seek professional support