

# Parents Matter

MAY 2020



## Managing Your Child's Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Special Edition in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

We are all struggling to manage living in this unprecedented time of being in a lockdown. It can be challenging to cope with all the stressors: social distance rules, wearing masks and other measures like being isolated in our homes. Times of crisis like this can worsen mental health symptoms. Below are some strategies you can employ to help manage some of the symptoms. These strategies are not only helpful for your children but for you as parents too.

- **Stay Connected** – Social distancing rules can be very challenging, as we cannot participating in social gatherings and see friends. Fortunately, technology like Zoom and face- time provides an opportunity to stay connected with people that we care most about. Encourage your child to stay connected with peers by doing facetime calls or Zoom sessions. Spending 15 minutes talking with a friend keeps your child stay connected despite not being physically together.
- **Avoid Watching Excessive Amounts of News or Social Media** – Although it is important to stay informed about what is happening in the world, it is important to have a balance and not expose you or your child to a barrage of information. Limit the amount of time your child spends on social media and news sites as extensive exposure can increase anxiety and depression.
- **Nurture Hobbies** – You can encourage your child to take a virtual art class, yoga class or dance class. Having extra time during this pandemic is a perfect opportunity for your child to focus additional energy fostering a hobby or even learning a new one.

Encourage your child to participate in a virtual class with a friend.

- **Make Exercise Part of Your Daily Routine** – The exercise does not have to be intense; it can consist of walking. A virtual exercise class with a friend can be fun.
- **Maintain Structure** – While challenging, it can be beneficial to adhere to structure every day. Maintaining sleep hygiene routine is an important part of this.
- **Self-Care** – Make time every day to engage in an activity that you find enjoyable and relaxing like reading a book or even watching a movie. Your children can participate with their friends in google hangout while simultaneously watching a movie or series on Netflix. The point is to make it a priority every day to do something that brings you joy and comfort.

It is important to validate how your child is feeling and encourage them to express it. They may feel less than optimal, experience sadness, and may not be interested in starting a new hobby. This is to be expected. Sometimes acceptance of where someone is can be healthier than focusing on changing where they are. It is most important to emphasize to your child that we are all in this surreal time together.



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