



Tips for Supporting Your Child/Youth during COVID-19 Outbreak



*"Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand."
(Isaiah 41:10)*

Regular news coverage about the new COVID-19 virus may be upsetting to many of our children and youth and their families. We want you to know that caring adults are also available at the school to support both you and your child. Our professional mental health staff (school psychology and social work staff) have created some tips to help you and your child feel safe, as we all work together throughout this time.



1. **Be reassuring.** Youth will take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Your reactions are important. Youth need factual and age-appropriate information about the disease and risks associated with it as well as measures to keep themselves safe. Reassure them that they are safe and that you and other adults will take care of them.
2. **Listen and Observe.** Let the child/youth guide you to learn how he/she may feel or how much information he/she needs. If the youth is not focused on the spread of the disease, just let them know that you are there. Be available to answer questions that are appropriate to their developmental age. Pay attention to changes in behaviour or social interactions.
3. **Monitor the news and social media.** Be aware of information child/youth may be exposed to in the news and through social media. It is helpful to have open discussions about what is seen and/or heard in order to help put it into perspective. Try to avoid watching or listening to information on the news that may be upsetting when your child/youth may be present. In general, constantly watching for updates in the news may increase our anxiety and by extension anxiety for our youth.
4. **Emphasize resiliency.** Help child/youth understand people's strengths in overcoming difficult situations. Focus on the youth's own competencies in terms of how he/she has coped in daily life during difficult times. In age-appropriate terms, identify other situations from which people and communities have recovered.
5. **Maintain a normal routine as much as possible within the family.** Allowing youth to deal with their reactions is important but so is providing a sense of normalcy. Keep a regular routine and schedule or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing. Spending time with family continues to be an important source of stability and connectedness.
6. **Pray as a community.** Prayer can be a healing act in times of difficulty. Encourage youth to take time to self-reflect and pray, including for those impacted more directly.
7. **Ask for help if your child/youth needs it.** If you feel your child/youth requires extra support, consider contacting mental health supports in your community (call 211). Once schools re-open, you can also contact the school. Together, parents and teachers can determine what supports may be needed at school and at the classroom level. You can also contact the school administrators in order to access the school social worker or psychology staff.
8. **Be aware of your own needs.** You will be better able to support your child/youth if you can express your own emotions in a productive manner, as well as getting appropriate sleep, nutrition, and exercise and extra support if needed.



Sources:

- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print>
- The National Association of School Psychologists on-line resource database: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources>
- Trauma, Crisis Intervention and Resilience in Children and Youth <https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/psychology/linksandresources/Documents/Trauma%20Crisis%20Intervention%20and%20Resilience.pdf>
- schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-kids-during-crisis