

## Ways to Manage Stress and Anxiety and Support Our Children

- **Practise Self-Compassion.** Even those who don't typically struggle with anxiety may experience increased anxiety during uncertain times, so don't be hard on yourself if you are feeling more worried or anxious than usual.
- **Practise Self-Care.** It remains important to engage in healthy and relaxing activities that you enjoy. Consider a wide variety of fun, intellectually stimulating, and physically active options such as reading for professional growth or leisure, cooking, practising yoga, exercise, meditation, and spending time in nature.
- **Stay connected with family and friends through virtual visits.**
- **Establish and maintain routines.** Keeping similar routines and developing healthy new routines helps provide predictability and a sense of safety for you and your family.

The COVID-19 pandemic may be a very stressful and frightening time for our children. While it is important to remember that fear and anxiety about disease is normal, excessive worry is not. All individuals will respond differently during stressful times. Anger, confusion and guilt are common ways children respond to world events. However, there are many things we can do as parents to support our children during these extraordinary times.

All individuals manage stress in different ways. When stress becomes unhealthy, certain actions may arise. Signs of unhealthy stress include significant fear or worry, change in sleeping patterns, change in diet or eating patterns, change in overall health, and even substance abuse.

When talking to our kids about the current situation, a solutions-focused approach is crucial.

Things to keep in mind when having these discussions include:

- Many individuals and organizations are helping during the current situation (governments, doctors, nurses, schools, etc.)
- It will get better
- Life will return to normal
- Focus on caring for our family and friends

## How to support students of all ages

### *All Children*


- Routines are important and can help to create a sense of predictability and security. Some examples of routines include scheduling daily academic time, outdoor activities and family time. Focus on the moment, mindfulness (sit quietly and focus on breathing and your senses).
- Model calmness, routine, and a focus on family and friends.
- It is appropriate to provide a fact-based discussion on the changing landscape of COVID-19. This discussion should be done in a calm and reassuring tone conveying the message that we are safe. We take precautions, but we are safe. Listen, provide age-appropriate information and focus on prevention (daily handwashing, social distancing).
- Focus on the positive, change in outlook from: 'we are stuck inside' to a focus on family and home.

### *Older Students*

- Social Media: limiting social media and news consumption. Watching the news together can provide an opportunity for conversation and help to keep things in perspective.
- Moderation in gaming time.
- Nutrition: eat as healthy as you can. Make balanced meals that you can prepare together.
- Sleep: try to ensure that older students are still getting enough sleep.  
[sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org)

### *Younger Students*

Younger students may show their stress in different ways, for example: crying, irritation, 'acting out,' reduced attention and concentration, regression to an earlier age such as bedwetting, and ceasing activities that they previously enjoyed. Here are some strategies to help reduce stress in younger students:

- More time with trusted adults
  - Increased play time, inside and out
  - Routines
  - Quiet times, to read books, listen to music, puzzles and playing board games
  - Adequate sleep
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## Supportive Resources

- NVSD Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Website
- Talking to Children about COVID-19 - Parent Resource from National Association of School Psychologists
- Corona Virus Resources - American School Counsellors Association
- Talking to Kids About The Corona Virus – Child Mind Institute
- Busting myths about the coronavirus – CBC Kids News
- Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus – NPR
- What to do if you're anxious or worried about COVID 19 – Anxiety Canada
- [covid19.thrive.health/](https://covid19.thrive.health/) - B.C. Self-Assessment Tool
- [psychologytoday.com/us/blog/caring-autism/202003/coronavirus-covid-19-what-talk-about-your-child](https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/caring-autism/202003/coronavirus-covid-19-what-talk-about-your-child) - article from Psychology Today: What to talk about with your child
- [fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus#faqs](https://fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus#faqs) -First Nations Health Authority

## Local supports

- Foundry North Shore - 604-984-5060
- MCFD Child Youth and Mental Health: 604-904-4336
- Vancouver Coastal Regional Distress Line: 604-872-3311
- MindHealthBC

## National supports

- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
- Anxiety Canada
- Canadian Mental Health Association

