Coronavirus resources for families and children

Dauphin County Mental Health recognizes that the current situation with the Coronavirus is causing anxiety and worry for both children and parents/caregivers . Routines have changed , social contact is limited and there is no defined end date for a return to school and regular activities.

Therefore, we are devoting this special edition of Mental Health TidBIT to providing some information and resources you may find helpful during this time. Below are some tips to support and protect children's emotional well-being during this challenging time.

1. ***Make sure that a sensitive and responsible caregiver is present.*** Research shows that the primary factor in coping with trauma is the presence of a supportive, caring adult.

2. ***Provide age appropriate information.*** Withholding information can be more stressful for children than telling the truth in age appropriate ways. When children don't receive information, they rely on their imagination to fill in the blanks.

3. ***Social distancing should not mean social isolation.*** Find creative ways for children to spend quality time with their caregivers. This could mean playing games, reading books, engaging in video chats, making drawings for their loved one or sending them cards or letters.

4. ***Create a safe physical and emotional environment by practicing the 3 R's—Reassurance, Routines and Regulations*** **Reassure** children about their safety and the safety of loved ones. Maintain a consistent **routine** as much as possible. Validate children's feelings and help them **self-regulate** through activities such as deep breathing, mindfulness and exercising.

5. ***Keep children busy.*** When children are bored their levels of worry and disruptive behavior may increase. Provide options for safe activities such as drawing, music or games.

6. ***Increase children's sense of self-control.*** Let children play an active role in helping themselves, their family and community. For example, they can learn proper handwashing techniques and help their family prepare meals or be present when their parent calls to check on an elderly neighbor.

7. ***Take care of yourself.*** Children's well-being depends on the well-being of their parent/caregiver. Find ways to connect with your supports, get enough rest and participate in activities that restore you.

8. ***Emphasize strength, hope and positivity.*** Help your children focus on stories about how people are coming together to help others or problem solve during these challenging times.

The above tips are excerpted from https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic#resources

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<u>Below are some links to websites with additional information you might find helpful</u>

For more tips and information on supporting your child's well-being during this time: https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic#resources

Additional tips for supporting your children can be found at https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/

Good overall guide on COVID 19 and staying healthy from the American Academy of Pediatrics https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx

Good information on self –care for adults https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html

Talking with children about Coronavirus https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html OR https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/?

State website for Coronavirus updates https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx

Story to help children understand Coronavirus:

https://www.flipsnack.com/KeshetChicago/coronavirus-social-story/full-view.html?fbclid=IwAR3YkmmuOpGYKs_xqIAFlY6uqAUrskoDpVZqT7imLhfsYWVLlYS0AxkqlPU

Websites with learning activities:

https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/articles/resources/scholastic-learn-at-home--free-resources-for-school-closures.html#

https://www.khanacademy.org/

https://www.funbrain.com/

https://www.brainpop.com/