



We've created a resource to help parents manage stress during the spread of COVID-19. Attached you'll find helpful information and tips, a handout to help with intentionality, and a list of family self-care activities.

Did you know that we offer tele-mental health services? This means that you can connect with a therapist over the phone or through a HIPAA compliant video platform!

We continue to offer all of the following:

- Parenting coaching
- Individual counseling for children and adults
- Social Skills groups for children and adults

To schedule an appointment, contact the office at one of our locations!

Marietta: (770) 726-9624

Johns Creek: (770) 680-4732

Parenting During COVID-19

Coping

- **Keep routines in place.**

Keeping your children on a schedule is crucial to surviving this time. Consistency and structure can help your child regulate his or her emotions. Children experiencing anxiety often benefit from knowing what's going to happen and when. Providing your child with predictability can help give them the security that they long for. Tip: Collaborate with your child when making the schedule. Getting them involved in the process helps increase compliance!

- **Keep it simple.**

Your children may not completely understand everything related to COVID-19, and they don't need to! Invite them to share what they already know and debunk any misconceptions. You can let them know that a sickness is spreading and that we are trying to slow it down. Focus more on what you all are doing as a family to keep everyone safe. Don't be afraid to say that you don't know an answer to a question!

- **Be patient with yourself and your kids.**

Working from home full-time or part time, managing your child's school assignments full time, and parenting full-time is what many parents are being asked to do. It's nearly impossible, so show yourself some grace. There are going to be times when you feel like screaming. Recognize your feelings and give yourself a minute to catch your breath, and respond calmly. Check in with yourself to determine if you're hungry, overstimulated, tired, or need to exercise. Determine the same for your children. Typically, if one of these needs isn't met, moods will start to decline.

Managing Anxiety

- Manage your own anxiety first. Watch out for negative thinking patterns or comments when you're in front of your children. It's completely normal for a parent to be anxious right now, but if you find yourself needing to express concerns, try to do it away from your children. Maybe this is a time to schedule a session with your own counselor to process the anxiety that you are experiencing. Tips:
 - Limit the amount of news you watch.
 - Stay in touch with family and friends via phone or video conferencing.
 - Exercise.
 - Make time for yourself.
- Give your child the space to process feelings. Validate their frustrations over not being able to spend time with friends and the change in routine. Provide a calming area with choice activities when anxiety levels are high and take frequent breaks in this area.

Discipline and Behavior

- **Give tons of praise.** Praising your child for desired behavior generally reduces negative behavior. In addition, giving your child simple jobs that he or she can do and praising them for completion also boosts positive behavior!
- **Catch negative behavior before it starts.** As the days go on, you'll start to notice what times of day your child is most likely to make poor choices. When you notice your child becoming restless, throw in a distraction! (snack, time outside, change in activity, etc.)
- **Follow through on consequences.** Following through on consequences help teach your child to be responsible for his or her actions. Make sure the consequence is realistic. For example, taking away screen time for an entire week may be difficult to enforce. However, taking it away for the 30-minute block in the daily schedule, may be more helpful.

Routine



Did we stick to a routine today?

What might need to change for tomorrow?

Exercise



What's a way that my family can get moving today?

Behaviors



Did we follow through on consequences today?

What might need to change for tomorrow to reduce negative behaviors?

Self-care



What's one thing that I can do for myself to help me recharge for tomorrow?

Family Self-care Activities

- **Read together.** Maybe it's time to roll out the classics!
- **Squeeze Muscles:** Starting at your toes, pick one muscle and squeeze it tight. Count to five. Release, and notice how your body changes. Repeat exercise moving up your body.
- **Belly Breathing:** Put one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. Slowly breathe in from your stomach (expand like a balloon) and slowly breathe out (deflate).
- **Mindful Meal:** Pay attention to the smell, taste and look of your food and talk about what you notice.
- **Meditation:** Sit in a relaxed, comfortable position. Pick something to focus on, like your breath. When your mind wanders, bring your attention back to your breath.
- **Blowing Bubbles:** Notice their shapes, textures and colors. Notice the sound when they pop.
- **Coloring:** Find a coloring book and pay attention to the colors and designs.
- **Take a bath.** Don't forget the bubbles!
- **Listening to Music:** Focus on the whole song, or listen specifically to the voice or an instrument
- **Start a vegetable garden.** We have many sunny days ahead!
- **Baking.** Don't forget to add frosting to decorate whatever you make.
- **Put on a talent show.** Get creative!
- **Play Charades.** This can even be done sporadically throughout the day.
- **Play a board game.** This is a great time to learn a new one.
- **Work on a puzzle.** We have plenty of time for that 1000-piece puzzle that you've been dying to do.
- **Make an old family recipe.** Maybe share stories about the family member who came up with the recipe.
- **Write a song.** Maybe a silly song to a familiar tune.
- **Research simple arts and crafts projects.** There are tons that use everyday household items.
- **Make a scavenger hunt.** Don't forget the clues!