



DEALING WITH **ANXIETY**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may be stressful for people, including children. Fear and anxiety about a disease, especially one that is unknown, can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. How you cope with the stress and anxiety, however, can make you, your child, your family, and your community stronger.

First, it is important to recognize signs associated with stress – here are a few common ones:

- 1** Excessive worry or sadness
- 2** Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- 3** Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- 4** Return to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- 5** Lack of sleep / changes in sleep patterns
- 6** Changes in eating patterns (e.g., undereating, overeating)
- 7** Difficulty focusing or concentrating on tasks
- 8** Poor school performance or avoiding schoolwork
- 9** Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- 10** Unexplained headaches or body pain
- 11** Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs



Whether or not your child shows any of these signs, self-care is important especially during times like these. Here are some things you can do to support yourself and your child.

- 1** Limit screen-time. Take breaks from social media, watching, reading, or listening to the news.
- 2** Take mindfulness breaks throughout the day. If necessary, set an alarm to remind you and your child to meditate for 5-10 minutes at least 2-3 times a day. Remind your child to take deep breaths and stretch as needed. Consider building in some time at the end of the meditation to discuss what came up for them during the exercise and how they worked through it.
- 3** Ask your child to think about or make a list of what they are grateful for. Gratitude is associated with happiness and can help people feel more positive emotions, improve their health, deal with obstacles, and build strong relationships.
- 4** Exercise together. Whether it's going for a quick walk at the park, doing push-ups, or testing out some yoga moves, exercise can release the endorphins (chemicals in the body that relieve stress and pain) your body needs to feel balanced. If you do decide to take a walk in the park together, remember to maintain at least 6 feet from anyone you see or run into – this is called **social distancing**.
- 5** Do some activities you love together. Card or board games, reading, writing, listening to music, cooking, and cleaning are all examples of activities you can do as a family. Thinking about some new ways to bond as a family? This is the perfect time to try out some new indoor activities as a family!
- 6** Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Although you may not be seeing some of your loved ones in person right now, you can always do a video chat using free applications like [WhatsApp](#), [Skype](#), and [Messenger](#). If you have an iPhone or iPad, you can [FaceTime](#) your loved ones.
- 7** Talk to your child about what they have heard about the coronavirus and how they are feeling. Conversations can be a great way to limit stress, anxiety, and uncertainty.
- 8** Model self-care for your child. Take breaks, get plenty of rest, try to eat healthy, and exercise, even if it's just for a few minutes a day. To best support your child during this time, we encourage you to take care of yourself and be well!

