

Children and Stress during COVID 19

Note to Leaders, Parents and Guardians

Today our children are faced with many physical, emotional and social stressful situations. They constantly deal with peer, school, sometimes parental pressures and high expectations for achievement. In addition to these daily encounters now, they are faced with the COVID 19 situation. It is evident that the problem continues to grow and as a result, parents are facing many unforeseen challenges in helping their children. At this critical time, families and specifically children may be struggling with fear, sadness and anxiety. These struggles can easily lead to stress. A parent or guardian should be alert to signs of stress in children and always be ready to initiate a dialogue to assist in coping with the current situation.

Handling Feelings of Stress

When parents and children are faced with situational stress it may seem to be hard to manage. To cope with any challenges of potential stress, parents can communicate to their children that other families, friends, and neighbors are also facing the same situation.

At this time, it is natural that children and families feel some anxiety and that they may feel misinformed and overwhelmed with what is happening to them and their community. It is important that parents explain to their children that stress is the way our body reacts to what is happening in critical surrounding events. Therefore, it is okay to feel, anxious and worried about things. These challenges and stressful situations are also being experienced by everyone in our country and the international community.

Dealing with Unexpected Situations.

- Ask children how they feel when they are worried and anxious about things out of their control.
- Ask children to list situations that causes them to be more stressed when they read or hear news about COVID 19 on a daily basis.

Managing and Reducing the Stressor - COVID 19

- Talk to children about the COVID 19, describe and explain how it is transferred, and follow fact based information supported by health educators, health professionals and medical Doctors.
- Work with children to demonstrate proper protective measures.
- Encourage of the use of face masks and gloves and even using hats when playing with other children or are in any small gathering places. Make it a habit to carry these protective items with you and your children at all time.
- Remember to tell your children to always wear gloves in public places. Like when contact with any metal surface, door knobs, stairways bar or handling shopping baskets and shopping carts.
- Avoid coughing in public.

- Encourage them to keep their physical and social distances (6 feet apart).
- Wash their face as needed and wash their hands frequently.
- Drink water, eat healthy, schedule structured physical fitness exercises and manage regular Sleep daily.

Research, indicates that some children ages 8-17 spend about 6 to 7 hours screen time, mainly watching TV, playing games and using cell phones. .

Dr.Gwenn O'keeffe pediatrician and author of CyberSafe : Protecting and Empowering Kids in the Digital World of Texting, Gaming and Social Media "And it's any kind of screen, computer, TV, cell phones or gaming", Indicated that "the more time kids spend in front of screens the more inactive they are We know for our health and overall well-being, that participating in different kinds of physical or social activates will help one to work better, sleep well, learn and get involved better in community activities Therefore, at this time of stressful situations it is advisable to help children use their social media skills in different ways of educational and productive activities.

Parents can Encourage and Help Children to:

- Create homemade and other hands-on activities from resource like U-tube, google and other educational sectors to keep children active and productive throughout the day.
- Work on short and long term projects that can be used at home and presented and displayed at club meetings and or even enter at the county and state fairs.
- Experience and discover new concepts on STEM and other science related projects, Practice and share with clubs and friends.
- Discover food and science projects. Learn to cook and bake to help parents and to enter at the fairs.
- Learn more about their animal's background and history, health information and how they can improve for sale, shows and exhibits.
- Read every day and write about self, family, friends and schools. Make a family tree and enter that at the fair.
- Explore new opportunities, try new things, like games sewing and cooking.
- Start a gardening project in your yard or in a dish or pot. Grow something for home use and a possible fair entry.
- Most of all, schedule structured physical activities, such as, jumping rope, dancing, walking, yoga, a daily stretching routine, and any other kind of activities that would help them be physically engaged.

Using these mechanisms and referring to a daily advice received from health professionals, health educators, local resources, parents can help themselves and guide their children to go through this stressful and challenging time of the COVID 19

Resources:

Maryland Government Department of Health

World Health Organization

4-H Thriving Model through an Equity Lens Organ State University

“Spaces” 4-H Youth Development, Cooperative Extension Service Michigan State University
“The Stress Connection” 4-H publication, by the” National 4-H Council
Stress Stoppers for Children and adults by Miriam J. Williams Wilson. R.N

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