



GET PSYCHED!

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5 steps that caregivers can take in supporting their children with pandemic-related anxiety

As the province moves towards easing COVID-19 restrictions, you may be wondering how to best support your children. Social distancing and isolation can take a toll on mental health. Children often look towards their parents or caregivers for answers, guidance and support. Below are steps you can take to help your child/adolescent with their anxiety.

1. Listen and Validate - It is important to listen to a child's concerns. Regardless of how unrealistic their fears may be, communicate that you hear them and express empathy.
2. Avoid blanket reassurance (i.e., "everything is going to be fine") - These statements can create further doubt and uncertainty, leading to a need for further reassurance. Instead, be honest, validate their feelings, acknowledge risks, and emphasize the precautions being taken to reduce those risks.
3. Assess your child's anxiety and encourage children to face their fears instead of avoiding them if safe to do so. Avoidance maintains the anxiety in the long-run.
4. Praise and reward children/youth for facing their fears - let them know you've noticed their actions and are proud of them for facing their fears courageously.
5. Model good coping. As parents/caregivers, children/youth will look to you to know how to react to situations. Be calm, honest, and caring. Use healthy coping strategies, such as breathing, going for a walk and talking about your feelings.

Adapted from: <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/7-tips-for-educators-returning-to-school-during-covid-19/>

That's Okay – It's called Coping!

So, you have been playing multiple roles for the last 3 months. In addition to being a parent, you have also become a teacher, a mental health worker, a technology expert, a "waiting-in-line" connoisseur and a cleaning specialist! This all adds up to a lot of stress, anxiety, insecurity and simply being completely overwhelmed in all aspects of your life. Well, guess what? That is okay – it's perfectly normal. Try not to be so hard on yourself. You are doing what you can and that is all you can expect from yourself. It is easy to say, but try to take things one day-at-a-time literally. There may be days when you need to take things one hour-at-a-time, or one minute at-a-time! This is okay – it's called coping! Try to provide some structure to your day. Maybe some time doing homework in the morning followed by a walk, pizza for lunch and definitely some "quiet" time in the afternoon. If you and your spouse are trying to "work" from home, take shifts. You cannot possibly "teach" your children and get them snacks while simultaneously working on that report for your supervisor. Keep your expectations as realistic as possible. Maybe you can only get 10 minutes of homework completed one day – or perhaps none at all! That's okay. Maybe you can't make 3 healthy meals every day. That's okay! Maybe your kids will spend 4 hours watching TV one day. That is also okay. It's called coping. You are doing what you need to do to get through each day. Remember, this too shall pass and we will all be okay!

quarantine + bingo =

'T I N G O

@scissor-tales_play

Set up an ART trag! caddy/ basket/ cart	play "Simon says"	Learn to spell your name in sign language!	FUN BATH = add a little food coloring + water - safe toys	try a toy rotation
Circuit work out: 4-5 stations of kid-friendly exercises	read a book + draw your favorite part	Soap foam sensory: 2T soap + 1/4c H ₂ O use elect. mixer to beat until foamy!!	start a nature-finds collection (or find 3 new treasures to add!)	BAKE something together
printmaking art: paint a surface, draw w/grip + "pull" print	hide-a-toy game: play "hot/cold" to find it (try w/ blindfold)	SCISSOR TALES art. thing. learning	wet paper + chalk art	*COSMIC* *KIDS* *YOGA*
listen to an audio book or story	DANCE PARTY!	take turns @ drawing portraits of each family member	make salt dough + bake your favorite creations	take turns writing 1-2 lines of a story, then illustrate!
make a blanket fort	still life art: nature find fruit + veggie	SNACK TIME! fill a muffin tin w/ different foods, try to eat blindfolded + guess the snack!	DIY obstacle course (inside/out!)	make a puzzle cut apart the front of a cereal or cracker box



The Four F's to increase WELLNESS

(Adapted from asdmentalhealth.blog.yorku.ca)

FITNESS

- Eat a balanced diet and keep hydrated.
- Stay active.
- Try to sleep well. Getting a good night's rest can be helpful for your mental health.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Spend time with and take care of your family and friends.
- Stay connected with your family and friends by calling, emailing, videoconferencing, or sending cards or letters by mail.

FUNCTION

- Prioritize self-care. Try different calming and relaxation activities.
- Go outside for fresh air.
- Schedule and plan activities with your child. Remember to offer choices to instill a sense of control, autonomy and motivation.
- Create structure and routine around key activities (like sleep routines, homework) to ensure predictability during the day.

FUN

- Schedule in a nice thing every day, something you can do that puts a smile on your face.
- Play games alone or with others.
- Consult lists of creative suggestions of fun activities for families at home such as the [Giant List of Ideas of being at Home with Kids](#).

How to nurture a child's mental health

- Actively listen before offering your advice
- Be patient
- Share your feelings and validate theirs
- Tell the truth
- Model healthy behavior
- Surround them with healthy adults
- Teach them how to be safe
- Use open ended questions
- Have scheduled family time
- Limit electronic time for everyone
- Reach out and hug them
- Be consistent and follow through with what you promise
- Believe them and in them
- Practice relaxation exercises together
- Model forgiveness
- Respond calmly when their emotions are elevated
- View their behavior as a window to their needs and feelings
- Make play and exercise a requirement
- Recognize positive choices
- Be present
- Set and respect boundaries

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Resources: