

CARING FOR CHILDREN DURING A CRISIS

These past few weeks, our world has been consumed with the effects of COVID-19. While children are not at high risk for severe illness due to COVID-19,¹ they may still suffer in other ways. Parents and adult caregivers may notice excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, difficulty with attention and concentration, and anger. These tips may help you as you guide your child through this difficult time.

PROVIDE SECURITY

Reassure your child that your family is doing everything they can to be safe, like wearing masks, washing hands, and keeping a safe distance from those outside your immediate family. Keep up regular routines in your household. Get up at the same time each day. Schedule school subjects for certain times of the day. Remember to include active play time each day. Limit your child's exposure to news coverage. Remind your child that we can always pray when we don't feel safe.

BE HONEST

Allow your child to talk about the pandemic and ask questions. This will help you clear up any misunderstandings she may have. Calmly sharing the facts about the virus can help relieve your child's worries.

VALIDATE FEELINGS

Acknowledge that feelings are real. Sad emotions are normal and important feelings. If your child is angry, help him to direct his anger at the cause of the problem, for instance, the virus. Provide emotional outlets such as hugs, exercise, stuffed animals, break time spots, painting, writing poetry, and prayer. Explain that God understands our feelings.²

KEEP YOUR CHILD ENGAGED

Very often, when we are involved in serving others, we forget about our own problems. Offer these suggestions as a way to help those around you:

- Send cards and letters to seniors.
- Use sidewalk chalk to write encouraging messages on your sidewalk or driveway.
- Take your child on a prayer drive to the hospital or a nursing home. Pray in the parking lot for patients and medical staff.
- Make a video of your child sharing a skill or talent. Send the video to friends and family.

BE AN EXAMPLE

Children look to adults for cues on how to respond to crisis. We shouldn't pretend we are not concerned, but we can demonstrate peace and trust in God. Your example can comfort and guide your child through these uncertain days.

SCRIPTURE VERSES TO SHARE

Trust in him at all times, you people. Tell him all your troubles. God is our place of safety.
Psalm 62:8 (NIrV)

He heals those who have broken hearts. He takes care of their wounds. *Psalm 147:3 (NIrV)*

I have told you these things, so that you can have peace because of me. In this world you will have trouble. But be encouraged! I have won the battle over the world.

John 16:33 (NIrV)

If your child is not responding to these strategies, you may need to seek professional counseling.

¹www.cdc.gov

²Dockery, Karen. *When a Hug Won't Fix the Hurt*. Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2000, Print