

Helping Manage Anxiety

There is widespread anxiety about COVID-19, which is common in the case of epidemics and pandemics. There are still uncertainties about this disease, which also fuels anxiety and panic. Many people are experiencing mood problems, sleep issues, phobia and spikes in symptoms for pre-existing mental health disorders like obsessive-compulsive disorder.

How you can help:

- Encourage them to take a break from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Encourage them to take care of their bodies. Take deep breaths, stretch, or other exercise techniques. They should eat healthy, well-balanced meals and get plenty of sleep.
- Help them find constructive ways to manage their anxiety, especially if these worries are adversely affecting their work performance, relationships, and daily routines.
- Encourage them to connect with others and talk with people they trust about their feelings
- Encourage them to call their healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of their daily activities for several days in a row

Helping Parents with a Substance Abuse/Mental Health History

How you can help:

- Ask the parent what might happen if they have a delay in accessing substance abuse or mental health treatment/services.
- Discuss with the parent things that might help during a potential treatment/service disconnection
- Discuss potential risks they may face
- Ensure they have enough medication (If prescribed)
- Offer to brainstorm safety strategies and safe social supports
- Offer assistance and resources to the parent to be able to **safely access expanding telehealth** options, including both telephone and video-based services
- **Ask service providers** about their emergency plan for maintaining access to essential treatment services during the current pandemic, both in the case that the parent is exhibiting symptoms, as well as in the case of the treatment/service program needing to limit hours/services.

Helping Parents/Caregivers Prepare for a Quarantine or Self-Isolation

People placed in quarantine or self-isolation may experience a wide range of feelings, including fear, anger, sadness, irritability, guilt or confusion. Humans are social creatures and need connection to others to thrive, which can make isolation challenging.

How you can help:

- Discuss a plan with parents/caregivers on how other family, friends or trusted individuals can care for children.
- If travel is restricted, discuss whether the parent/caregiver will need assistance. If so, determine who care help.
- Determine if parents/caregivers have stocked up on food, household supplies, and necessary medications in the event they must remain at home. They should keep important numbers handy.
- Encourage them to keep busy by keeping a normal routine at home.
- Encourage social interaction by phone, videoconference, chat or text.
- Encourage Self-Care by practicing relaxation or meditation.

Helping Survivors of Domestic Violence

People who are surviving violence in their relationships and families may be experiencing increased isolation and danger caused by social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Survivors often have specific needs around safety, health and confidentiality.

How you can help:

- Ensure survivors have information for local and national Domestic Violence Hotlines.
 - Florida Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-500-1119
 - National Domestic Violence Hotline:1-800-799-7233
 - Additional Hotlines & Helpline Info:
<http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/Helpline.shtml>
- Discuss current safety plans.
- Discuss trusted friends, co-workers, or family members who could check in with the survivor regarding safety and support needs.

Helping to Support Children

Children's responses to stressful events are unique and varied. Some children may be irritable or clingy, and some may regress, demand extra attention, or have difficulty with self-care, sleeping, and eating. New and challenging behaviors are natural responses, and adults can help by showing empathy and patience and by calmly setting limits when needed.

How you can help:

- Ensure children are in the presence of a sensitive and responsive parent/caregiver.
- Take time to talk with children COVID-19. Answer questions and share facts about it in a way that they can understand.
- Reassure them they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to limit their exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Encourage parents/caregiver to keep up with their regular routines. If schools are closed, parents/caregivers should create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model and encourage parents/caregivers to do the same. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

****For comprehensive public health information relating to COVID-19 please visit the [CDC's COVID-19 Webpage](#)**