



HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH CRISIS

HOW TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW OLD YOU ARE, LIVING THROUGH A CRISIS CAN BE VERY SCARY. Children often feel upset or display strong emotions because they don't understand what is going on and why their lives have to change, even if it's just temporary.

Children react to stress and anxiety in various ways during each stage of their childhood. The best thing parents can do in this unusual time is to calm their child by providing reassurance, confidence and compassion. Even though it can be hard when you're stressed as well, focus on being patient and tolerant by understanding that your child is also feeling distressed and out of sorts. It's also important to be supportive and encouraging.

When your child is stressed, it's helpful to plan comforting activities, maintain routines as much as possible, avoid watching too much news and discuss the crisis while encouraging questions. Provide truthful information, but be aware of the words you use, especially ones that could be considered frightening.

During a crisis like COVID-19 it's important to notice your child's reaction to the crisis and understand whether that reaction is putting your child into distress.

Here are signals that your child may be feeling stress and anxiety:

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 5

- Fear of being alone
- Bad dreams
- Bed-wetting, loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation
- Change in appetite
- Increased temper tantrums, whining or clinging behaviors

FOR CHILDREN AGES 6 TO 12

- Irritability, whining, aggressive behaviors
- Clinging, nightmares, sleep and appetite disturbances
- Headaches, stomachaches
- Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest
- Competition for parent's attention
- Forgetfulness

FOR TEENS AGES 13 TO 18

- Physical symptoms such as headaches or rashes
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Agitation or apathy and a decrease in energy
- Ignoring health promotion behaviors
- Isolating from peers and loved ones
- Concerns about stigma and injustices
- Avoiding school work

Sourced from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network