

Keep your kids happy and healthy

Never in a million years did you expect to be parenting kids through a global pandemic, right? Sure you've had parenting challenges before, but if you're finding it particularly challenging right now, you're not alone.

Kids everywhere are experiencing something out of the norm. Having to stay inside, taking online classes, not meeting up with friends and grandparents ... their lifestyle and routine have changed completely causing fear, anxiety, irritability and frustration. Voices are raised and tempers flare ... families are under a lot of stress, to say the very least.

You, along with millions of other parents are left wondering: "How will I manage it all?" None of us has a roadmap for how to understand and digest a crisis of this magnitude. And kids don't have the perspective, knowledge, or coping mechanisms to manage the myriad of feelings that come with something like this.

So, **address their fears**. Answer their questions about the pandemic simply and honestly. Yes, keep them in the loop, but keep it simple. Talk to them about the news they hear and remind them that preventative measures such as hand washing and staying at home will help your family to remain healthy. Be a good role model – if you wash your hands more often, they're likely to do the same. Manage your own anxiety by keeping a sense of perspective with mindful acceptance, they will follow your cues. Remind your child that you are doing everything in your power to keep loved ones safe.

Recognise your child's feelings. Take time to check-in emotionally every day. Ask them how they are feeling about missing school and their friends. Tell them that it's okay to feel sad or angry about it. Try to explain why social distancing is so important right now and help them to find ways to stay in touch with friends and loved ones. Kids may worry about grandparents living alone, so have regular video chats with grandpa and grandma.

Build their immune system. Encourage a healthy diet, make sure that they're getting enough sleep and exercise. Be on the lookout for excessive snacking, emotional eating and lack of physical activity. Of course, the structure is key; the more kids can anticipate, the safer and more secure they will feel. So, focus on scheduled meal and snack times. Have fruit available for when they get hungry in between.

Find the silver lining. Remind your kids that scientists are working hard to come up with a vaccine and that this too shall pass. Offer extra hugs and say "I love you" more often.

Remember mom and dad, kids who are acting out and are defiant may actually be feeling anxious. Respond to outbursts in a calm and comforting way. Avoid physical punishment, it isn't effective and may take away a child's sense of safety and security at home, which is especially needed now.

As we all work through adjusting to the new normal, it's up to us as parents to make sure that our kids know that they are loved and supported no matter what.

The goal is to stay sane and to stay safe.

Good luck everyone!

Source: talkspace.com, chop.edu, healthychildren.org, healthblog.uofmhealth.org, cdc.gov, independent.co.uk, childmind.org, prodigygame.com, nasponline.org