

Coronavirus pandemic:

How parents can support their children

In stressful and unsettling situations, each child reacts differently. Some may experience physical symptoms like fatigue, headache, stomach ache, or feel a loss of appetite. Others may appear frightened, unsettled, nervous, or irritable, and some may have difficulties sleeping. Nevertheless, there are also children who do not show any obvious signs of distress.

11 useful tips to help your child

- **Allow your child to show emotions. Be there for your child.**
Take your child's feelings and concerns seriously. Make sure your child can rely on you.
- **Spend quality time with your child.**
It may be easier for children to talk about things that are unsettling or ask difficult questions while they are playing, doing handicrafts or painting.
- **Be careful and attentive.**
Some children may not want to be alone now or may not want to spend the night alone. Be there for your child, but also accept your own needs. Try to appear calm and confident.
- **Talk about the current situation in a child-oriented manner.**
Explain measures such as curfews, the closure of schools and shops, and why it is not possible to see friends right now. Try to keep your explanations simple, but answer questions honestly.
- **Avoid talking about possible negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic,**
otherwise fears and uncertainty may grow even more. Protect your child from worrying images on TV and the Internet.
- **Show your child how to handle the current situation.**
Talk about what helps yourself to calm down and relax. Your child will be given an example of how to deal with the current situation.
- **Ask your child what kind of support they would like to get** when troubling thoughts come up.
Maybe distractions, or on the contrary, some rest may help.
- **Give your child the opportunity to find ways of distraction.**
Games and indoor sport activities can help here. Involve your child in household chores. As a family, you can also take a walk. However, try to avoid crowded spots and keep a safe distance from others when doing so.
- **Provide your child with daily routines.**
Days should consist of activities (such as studying and playing), regular meals together and a consistent bedtime. Plan the day or week together with your child (e.g. use a timetable or calendar your child can design).
- **Make use of materials and online tools provided by your child's school.**
Your school can provide you with further information. Make sure your child takes enough breaks while studying. Do not ask too much of your child or yourself. You are not supposed to replace your child's teachers.

- **Enable contact with friends and family by using the telephone and social media.**

Even if loved ones like grandparents or good friends can no longer be visited, show your child how we can still keep in touch with others (e.g. via the phone, pictures and conversations on social media maybe even by writing letters). However, try to keep calm when it comes to hysteric reactions or the spreading of fake news on social media platforms. .

General recommendations

During prolonged periods of an exceptional situation, it has been shown to be helpful if you structure your days by keeping up **certain routines** (e.g. getting up at a set time, having fixed periods for work or household chores, regular hours for meals and bedtime, etc.).

Keep the importance of **enjoyable activities** in mind (e.g. talking to friends and family via the phone, doing handicrafts, reading, cooking, watching a good film, etc.). Also make sure that you get enough physical exercise (e.g. do online fitness exercises, use your exercise bike). These measures will help you to get the currently difficult situation off your mind temporarily. Perhaps as a family, you can plan activities or measures that **enhance your well-being** together. However, set yourself **realistic goals** (e.g. writing a diary, creating a photo album, learning new skills, tidying up, doing exercises at home, trying out new relaxation techniques, getting tasks done you have never found the time before, etc.)

If you feel worried or frightened, we recommend that you **share your thoughts with people close to you**. It can help enormously to stay in touch with others regularly (call grandparents, use video calls, write letters, see whether you can support elderly neighbours etc.). However, try not to focus on problems and current concerns too much. Also, consciously share **positive thoughts and ideas**, and encourage each other in these difficult times.

By the way: Sharing a good laugh is also allowed in times of crisis!