

Tips for Parents on Being a Positive Role Model for Their Children During Coronavirus Outbreak

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We parents are faced with the challenge of responding to this evolving coronavirus outbreak in a manner that will model for our children how to manage anxiety, stress, and worry so that they can learn how to do the same. Public health emergencies are not easy for anyone to comprehend or accept. Many children may feel frightened, lonely, confused, bored, and worried. And, with many of us now working from home, it's inevitable that we will have times when we feel we've hit our limit of stress, and interacting in cramped quarters will prove difficult. Children learn from watching the adults around them. They will be very attuned to how we respond to this situation. And, don't forget, they will also learn from listening to our conversations with other adults, so we need to be careful around those young ears. If we as parents deal with this situation calmly and confidently, this is the best support we can give our children. Remember, children learn what they live, not what we tell them. So, here are a few tips to help us be positive role models during these unprecedented times.

- **Be mindful of your routine.** Try, to the extent possible, to keep your normal family routines – meals, bedtimes, exercise, structure as far as work and online learning times.
- **Physical activity.** Movement and physical activity reduce stress and anxiety, so find ways to include this at home, such as dance, yoga, exercise, taking a walk outdoors, or riding bikes.
- **Emotional care.** Do things at home that have made you and your family feel better in other stressful situations, like watching movies, listening to music, baking, or playing games. There are now virtual museum tours and concerts available online—take advantage of these.
- **Limit screen time.** This means for everyone, not just your screen-addicted kids. Limit your exposure to news about COVID-19 on the TV or internet. Limit your information from reliable fact-based sources.
- **Connect.** Stay in touch with family and friends by phone, text, video chat, or email.

Hopefully, in this way we will be able to convey to children that we have it together. They depend on us for survival, and need to believe that we are strong and sturdy. We can't always prevent difficult things from happening to or around our children, but we can fortify them with skills to tap into their innate resiliency in the face of uncertainty and the unknown.