

Guidelines to help ensure Child Safety and Protection

Childhood is a critical period in any human's life, which marks the foundation of the personality of any person. Children are completely dependent on their parents/guardians for their well-being and maintenance. So in a situation where social isolation takes a toll on adults, children are left most susceptible to bearing the brunt of the repercussions.

Physically distancing ourselves is critical to prevent infection and the spread of the virus. At the same time, social connections are more important than ever to preventing child abuse and neglect.

Parents, educators and caregivers are invested in ensuring child safety during the pandemic and for this we need to spread awareness.

HOW CAN WE HELP SPREAD AWARENESS?

- 1. The present pandemic situation could cause stress in children and families. Children could experience fear, uncertainty as a result and they need to be assured and dealt with accordingly. Kids are watching the parents and learning how to best deal with stress.**
- 2. Parents and Teachers see children in different situations,so it is important for them to work together to share information on how each child is coping in the current crisis situation.**
- 3. Sharing these guidelines with neighbors will help other families with children.**

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOURSELF TO HELP YOUR CHILD:

1. TRY TO STAY CALM Take time for yourself so that you can present your best self to your children.

2. FIND WAYS TO STAY INFORMED—Find trusted sources of information regarding COVID 19 and limit your exposure to this material. Social media can be a major source of social support, but can also create feelings of fear, panic, and for some, feelings of inadequacy.

3. TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH—Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep. Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.

4. CONNECT WITH OTHERS. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

5. CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY- While social distancing measures are in place, consider connecting online at times or via phone calls.

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR CHILDREN:

- 1. ADDRESS CHILDREN'S FEARS.** Reassure your children that you are there for them and that your family will get through this together
- 2. ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PANDEMIC SIMPLY & HONESTLY.** It is okay to say people are getting sick, but say following rules like hand washing and staying home will help your family stay healthy.
- 3. RECOGNIZE YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS.** Calmly say, for example, "I can see that you are upset because you can't have your friends over." Guiding questions can help older children and teens work through issues. ("I know it is disappointing not to be able to hang out with your friends right now. How do you think you can stay in touch with them?")
- 4. KEEP IN TOUCH WITH LOVED ONES.** Video chats can help ease children's anxiety about relatives who might be living alone and at risk of getting COVID 19.
- 5. MODEL HOW TO MANAGE FEELINGS.** Talk through how you are managing your own feelings. ("I am worried about Grandma since I can't go visit her. The best I can do is to check in with her more often by phone. I will put a reminder on my phone to call her in the morning and the afternoon until this

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR CHILDREN :(continued)

6. **LOOK FORWARD.** Tell them that scientists are working hard to figure out how to help people who get ill, and that things will get better. Offer extra hugs and say "I love you" more often.

7. **KEEP HEALTHY ROUTINES.** Maintaining bedtime and other routines create a sense of order to the day that offers reassurance in a very uncertain time. All children, including teens, benefit from routines that are predictable yet flexible enough to meet individual needs.

8. **STRUCTURE THE DAY.** With the usual routines thrown off, establish new daily schedules. Break up schoolwork when possible. Older children and teens can help with schedules, but they should follow a general order. Family time and reading before bedtime does wonders.

9. **USE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE-**Everyone is more anxious and worried during the pandemic. **Younger children** may not have the words to describe their feelings. They're more likely to act out their stress, anxiety or fear through their behavior (which can, in turn, upset parents, particularly if they are already stressed). **Older children** and teens may be extra irritable as they miss out on time with friends and special events being cancelled.

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO MANAGE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR AND EMOTIONS:

- 1. REDIRECT BAD BEHAVIOR.** Sometimes children misbehave because they are bored or don't know any better. Find something else for them to do.
- 2. CREATIVE PLAY.** Suggest your children draw pictures of ways your family is staying safe. Make a collage and hang it up to remind everyone.
- 3. DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION --to reinforce good behaviors and discourage others--is a powerful tool. Notice good behavior and point it out, praising success and good tries. Explaining clear expectations, particularly with older children, can help with this.**
- 4. USE REWARDS & PRIVILEGES to reinforce good behaviors (completing school assignments, chores, getting along with siblings, etc.) that wouldn't normally be given during less stressful times.**
- 5. KNOW WHEN NOT TO RESPOND.** As long as your child isn't doing something dangerous and gets attention for good behavior, ignoring some bad behavior can be an effective way of stopping it.
- 6. USE TIME-OUTS.** This discipline tool works best by warning children they will get a time-out if they don't stop. Remind them what they did wrong in as few words—and with as little emotion—as possible. Then, remove them from the situation for a pre-set length of time (1 minute per year of age is a good guide).
- 7. SPECIAL TIME IN -** Even with everyone home together 24/7, set aside some special time with each child. **You choose the time, and let your child choose the activity.** Just 10 or 20 minutes of your undivided attention, even if only once every few days, will mean a lot to your child. Keep cell phones off or on silent so you don't get distracted.
- 8. AVOID PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT.** Spanking, hitting, and other forms of physical or “corporal” punishment risks injury and isn't effective. Physical punishment can increase aggression in children over time, fails to teach them to behave or practise self-control, and can even interfere with normal brain development. Corporal punishment may take away a child's sense of safety and security at home, which are especially needed now.

The above stated guidelines have been compiled from the present literature from various reputable sources, both national and international. The information provided is not a substitute for professional help for which please consult with your doctor for further referral or contact the nearest wellbeing/mental health setup.