



MICHIGAN
CHILDREN'S
TRUST FUND
CRISIS
PARENT &
CAREGIVER
GUIDE

CRISIS PARENT & CAREGIVER GUIDE

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FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT HOTLINE

1-855-444-3911

DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE

1-800-985-5990

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

1-800-799-7233

MICHIGAN 2-1-1

A one-stop connection to thousands of local agencies and resources that can help—24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call 211 or Text your ZIP Code to 898211

Chat Online - [Click Here](#)

PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST WARMLINE

A statewide, peer-run warmline for Michiganders living with persistent mental health conditions.

Call 888-PEER-753 (888-733-7753)

10 a.m. - 2 a.m., 7 days a week

SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION HOTLINE

1-800-985-5990 or Text TalkWithUs to 66746

HEALTHY WAYS FOR PARENTS TO COPE NORMAL REACTIONS TO A CRISIS

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. It's important to recognize these reactions and realize they are normal. You may feel:

ANXIETY, FEAR

Over your health status or the health of others.

Due to time taken off from work, loss of income, job security.

Because of the obstacles to securing essential items.

Concern over the responsibility of effectively caring for your children and others in your care.

ANGER, FRUSTRATION

Because of the uncertainty of how long you will be in this situation.

Over the challenges of being stuck at home, with no time to yourself, potentially while trying to work remotely.

Due to boredom or inability to participate in work or regular activities.

If you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence.

Over insufficient healthcare resources to handle a crisis.

HELPLESS

Due to a lack of control over the situation.

LONELINESS

Due to feeling cut off from the world, your community, and loved ones.

DEPRESSED

Symptoms of depression include: feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, sleeping too little or too much.

TEMPTATION

A desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope.

The urge to take your anger, frustration, anxiety, or sadness out on others.

HEALTHY WAYS FOR PARENTS TO COPE MANAGING YOUR RESPONSE TO STRESS

Check out these ways to manage your response to stressful situations:

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Modify your daily activities to meet the current reality of your situation. Focus on what you CAN accomplish, not what you are unable to do. Celebrate the small victories, especially when it comes to your children.

SHOW YOURSELF COMPASSION

Try building more compassion, not only towards others, but also towards yourself. Try to recognize self-defeating statements and replace them with more encouraging thoughts. Self-compassion is known to enhance life-satisfaction, overall psychological and emotional well-being and mood.

EXERCISE

Study shows that people who exercised adequately may be less likely to feel as stressed out, depressed, and lonely as compared to others. Even light exercise like a short walk can make a difference.

INTERACT WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

Make it a point to have some meaningful conversations with loved ones as often as possible. If you do not have family members around and are having difficulty initiating or maintaining friendships, seek professional help from a therapist. Therapy can help you develop a better relationship with yourself which itself can reduce loneliness and in turn, can enhance other relationships. Even one good relationship can make a marked difference.

MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Time alone is important! Don't feel guilty for taking a walk by yourself, enjoying a warm bubble bath, or whatever makes you feel at ease. Your kids won't mind a little extra screen time.

**Remember, you are a role model for your children.
How you handle stressful situations will affect how your children manage their worries.**

Source: *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH A CRISIS

WHAT TO EXPECT & HOW TO RESPOND

Regardless of your child's age, he or she may feel upset or have other strong emotions during a crisis. Some children react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty much later. How a child reacts and the common signs of distress can vary according to the child's age, previous experiences, and how the child typically copes with stress.

AGE	REACTIONS	HELPFUL RESPONSES
PRE-SCHOOL (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being alone, bad dreams • Speech difficulties • Loss of bladder/bowel control; constipation, bed-wetting • Change in appetite • Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and tolerance • Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) • Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling • Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements • Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime • Maintain regular family routines • Avoid media exposure
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parents' attention • Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through • Regular exercise and stretching • Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) • Participate in structured household chores • Set gentle but firm limits • Discuss the current outbreak; encourage questions & include what is being done in the family/community • Encourage expression through play and conversation • Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school • Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
TEENS (13-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones • Concerns about stigma and injustices • Avoiding or cutting school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Encourage continuation of routines • Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force) • Stay in touch with friends through phone, Internet, video games • Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school • Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a disaster calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Source: *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS

TALKING THROUGH A CRISIS

Communication is key during a crisis. While it may seem safer to shelter children from stressful information, you can actually help them feel more at ease by calmly talking through the situation together. Focus on supporting children by encouraging questions and helping them understand the situation.

REMAIN CALM & REASSURING

Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

Provide comfort and a bit of extra patience.

MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE TO LISTEN & TALK

Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.

Encourage them to talk about their feelings and be sure to validate them.

Help them express their feelings through drawing or other activities.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR LANGUAGE

Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for their age and developmental level. Consider having a separate discussion with young children in order to use language they can understand and to address specific fears or misconceptions they may have.

EMPHASIZE YOUR SUPPORT

Reassure your children that you will take care of any needs they may have.

Check back in with your children on a regular basis or when the situation changes.

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Being intentional and specific when asking questions will allow you to facilitate meaningful conversation, aiding in your child's development as an individual as well as your growth as a strong, happy, and connected family.

TO GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILD BETTER

- What traits do you look for when you're making friends and why?
- What's your favorite thing about yourself?
- What's something that you find embarrassing and why?
- What goal(s) do you have for yourself?

TO ENHANCE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- What's your favorite thing about your family and why?
- What are some things you've learned from your family?
- If you could make three family rules, what would they be?
- What should we do more of as a family? What do you wish we did less of?
- What do you like best about your siblings? What about your siblings do you find challenging?

TO HELP SHOW GRATITUDE

- What was the best part about your day and why?
- What are some things you feel grateful for today and why?
- What are some things that you don't need, but you're really happy to have?
- What are some things that are easy to complain about, but can actually be really great?

TO HELP DEVELOP IMAGINATION

- What's something that makes you excited?
- What do you dream about? What do you wonder?
- If you wrote a book or made a movie, what would it be about?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- What color is the happiest? What color is the angriest? What color is the most excited?

TO DEVELOP EMPATHY

- How were you able to be kind to someone today?
- How do you think other people feel about the way that you treat them?
- How can you support someone you see who is feeling down, being teased, etc.?
- If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be and why?

TO DEVELOP MENTAL STRENGTH

- What's your favorite topic/subject to learn about?
- What feeling is the most uncomfortable for you?
- How do you face your fears when you have them?
- Who helps you achieve your goals?

CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

ACTIVITIES TO DO TOGETHER

Take advantage of this extra time with your children to have fun and engage in creative activities **together**. Here are some ideas with links to instructions:

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Organize a scavenger hunt
- Go on an educational nature walk (learn about trees & plants, insects, birds, etc.)
- Create a garden
- Set up an obstacle course

INDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Build a blanket fort
- Throw a dance party (Don't forget to play both of your favorite songs!)
- Put on a fashion show
- Design a Masking Tape Race Track
- DIY memory game
- Learn a magic trick
- Take up yoga
- Write letters to family & friends
- Look through family pictures & home videos
- Make a time capsule
- Bake your favorite treat
- Have a Career Day- ask your child what they want to be when they grow up and spend the day learning about the profession

ARTS & CRAFTS

- Make a thumb print family tree while learning about family history
- Finger Paint
- Make instruments out of recyclables
- Learn origami
- Create window art

NAVIGATING A CRISIS WHILE PARENTING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Plotting a course through a crisis is a trying experience for all. Caregivers supporting individuals with autism during stressful times face extra challenges. These 7 strategies and the associated resources and examples will allow individuals with autism to better understand stressful situations cope with the many changes associated with crises, and practice communication, social, and adaptive skills that may reduce some of the trials during uncertain times.

SUPPORT UNDERSTANDING

Describe new situations using concrete language and terms. Avoid flowery or abstract phrasing.

Use a social narrative, a story that clarifies a situation and possible responses through modified text, photos, or the use of technology. Click [here](#) for examples.

Provide visual supports to offer guidance on situation specific actions and behaviors.



OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPRESSION

Consider providing multiple opportunities for family members to express their feelings as they are able—through family and individual discussions, writing activities, movie making, or play.

Feelings and needs may be communicated through alternate forms of expression such as the use of augmentative and alternative communication (e.g. iPad, pictures), listening or playing music, dance, yoga, and various visual art forms.

PRIORITIZE COPING AND CALMING SKILLS

Ideally, individuals with autism have some coping and calming strategies in their repertoire of skills to access with support during their most anxious times.

These may include rocking in a rocking chair, listening to music on headphones, deep breathing, watching a preferred video clip, brief periods of vigorous exercise, or accessing a favorite activity or material.

If coping or calming strategies are not yet part of the routine, caregivers can prioritize the teaching of these skills during this time of uncertainty.

Source: UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team

NAVIGATING A CRISIS

WHILE PARENTING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

MAINTAIN ROUTINES

Sleep/wake routines: Maintaining physical health is key for all family members and ensuring proper sleep is an important contributor. Sleep disturbances are more common in individuals with autism, thus extra attention may be required to support good sleep hygiene and maintain bedtime and waking routines.

Household chores/daily living skills: Taking part in structured household chores and routines is a recommended strategy to support children and young adults coping with stress related to change.

Expanding the use of a visual schedule, and using one more regularly throughout the day, may help facilitate participation in activities at home and reduce anxiety.

BUILD NEW ROUTINES

Transition off screens. Establishing a clear, consistent, and concrete routine for this transition can better prepare the individual for the coming transition and offer support throughout.

Offer choices. In a time of crisis, when most people feel like so much is out of their control, providing choices can increase a sense of autonomy and motivation. Creating regular opportunities across the day where family members have a voice about what happens and when it happens can serve as an effective anxiety reducing strategy and a communication tool.

FOSTER CONNECTIONS

Caregivers may need to check in to ensure social contact is continuing via text or direct messaging, and/or build in opportunities for daily social contact with family, friends, neighbors, teachers, or others. Scheduling time to connect with others via online platforms to attend religious services, play chess, participate in socially engaged gaming, complete online schoolwork, or virtually volunteer are ways to promote social interaction..

BE AWARE OF CHANGING BEHAVIORS

Individuals with autism may not be able to verbally express their fear, frustration, and anxiety about the many changes and/or their health, so these expressions may be demonstrated through other means. Caregivers should be aware of the behavior of individuals with autism during uncertain times and be alert for signs of anxiety and depression. These may include a change in sleeping or eating patterns, increases in repetitive behaviors, excessive worry or rumination, increased agitation or irritability, or decreases in self-care.

Source: UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES & THE 5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach including everyday actions parents and providers can use to increase family strengths and enhance child development. These five key protective factors are attributes that serve as buffers, helping parents find resources, support, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress.

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.

CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

Source: Strengthening Families