



TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS DURING COVID-19

Behavior is communication

Children express their feelings with behavior. When anxious or fearful, they may have more temper tantrums, experience changes in sleeping or eating behaviors, or act clingy. You may also notice patterns in their play that include control, isolation, imprisonment, or sickness. Sometimes knowing the feelings behind the behavior can help parents or caregivers cope.

Find space and time to talk

Children and teens may have questions about what is happening in the world. They may have questions about their friends, family members, and school, and come to you with their questions. It is important to set aside time and space to talk. Limiting distractions, like stepping away from technology, can help create space. If you are not able to talk when they come to you, let children and teens know when you can talk uninterrupted, and be sure to follow through.

Adjust according to age and abilities

After finding space and time to talk, consider what messages children and teens will understand based on their age and their abilities. If you're having trouble knowing what to say, your child or teenager's teacher, case manager or therapist can help brainstorm ideas.

Family Resources

- [Michigan.gov/StayWell](#)
- [Family Well-Being Guide](#)
- [Coping with Stress as a Family](#)
- [Coping with Grief and Loss](#)
- [Move Your Way](#)
- [Child Mind Institute](#)

For Young Children

- [Talking with children about COVID-19](#)
- Brain Building:
 - [Infants to Preschoolers](#)
 - [Young Children](#)
- [Coronavirus Comic Book](#)
- [Coronavirus Coloring Book](#)
- [The Importance of Self-care](#)

For Teens

- [Supporting Teens and Young Adults](#)
- [Addressing Challenges Teens Experience during and beyond COVID-19](#)
- [Supporting Adult Children Returning Home with Substance Use Disorders](#)
- [Supporting LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults](#)

Help children and teens stay focused and busy

One way to help children and teens is to focus on what is going well. You may suggest keeping a gratitude journal or identifying positive things in life right now. Another way to keep children and teens busy is to try something new, like a hobby or going on a virtual national park tour. Finding ways to stay healthy are also beneficial, consider family walks or virtual exercise classes.



Encourage breaks from the media

Information from the media is changing daily, sometimes even hourly. It can be overwhelming, and is not always accurate. For those who have mental health challenges, it may feel even more overwhelming. Focusing on other things can be helpful. Encourage children and teens to go for a walk outside, create art, listen to music, watch a zoo cam, or read a book. Focusing on something other than the media can be helpful for you too.

Create a COVID-19 time capsule

Taking time to reflect is valuable, not only for our own well-being but also our children's, especially during these unique circumstances. This time has brought challenges and stressors unlike those we have experienced before, but it has also created opportunities. Taking time with our children to reflect on the events that are taking place is a wonderful way to bond and grow together, as well as facilitate open conversations and strengthen trust.

Consider filling out this COVID-19 Time Capsule with your child, or if they are older – encourage them to work on it and share their perspective. Take some time every day to find the good and share it with your children – it can be the boost everyone needs to stay strong and stay well!

[Get started on your time capsule](#)

Things to try together

Family Activities

- [Action for Happiness](#)
Download monthly calendars and activities.
- [Kennedy Krieger Institute](#)
Daily activities for families.

Mindfulness

- [Headspace.com/MI](#)
Mindfulness and meditation for Michiganders.
- [Mindfulness and Stress Resilience Activities](#)
- [GoNoodle.com](#)
Movement and mindfulness videos.

Parks & Zoos

- [Virtual National Park Tours](#)
- [San Diego Zoo - Live Cam](#)

Try to keep a schedule

Structure is helpful for children and teens, so they know what to expect. One way to create structure is to make a schedule but allow flexibility. A schedule can include when to go to sleep and wake up, meal times, time for learning, play, independent time and chores. As summer camps open and caregivers work schedules change, it is important to inform children and teens of upcoming changes to these schedules.



Get rest and stay active

Children and teens who do not get enough sleep and exercise are at greater risk for health and behavior problems. Learn about how much [sleep](#) your child needs and what amount of daily [exercise](#) is appropriate based on your child's age.



Create opportunities to contribute

Give children and teenagers an opportunity to contribute to how the family and household runs. Provide a variety of ways, based on their age and ability, so they have a choice in how they contribute! This can include household chores, assisting with meals, or helping a sibling learn something new.

Maximize your support network

For many, this can be a stressful and challenging time. There may not be as many resources available, like respite care, that you would normally use. Reaching out to family, friends, and other supports that can provide space for you to talk about your needs. If you don't have anyone to talk with, you can also text RESTORE to 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line and speak to a trained professional who is ready to help.



Parenting in our “new normal”

As we all begin to safely interact outside our home it is important to help children and youth understand what social distancing means and when to wear face coverings. Talking to your children and teens about how to safely interact helps to prepare them for handling situations they may encounter with friends and peers.

STAY WELL
Michigan.gov/StayWell