



## **MENTAL WELLNESS**

### **SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19**

Children and teens take their cues and react based on how the adults around them are reacting. If parents and teachers are dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak in calm and confident manner, they are providing the best support to help their children cope. It is important though to be prepared. “it is not a crisis if the adults know what to do”!

#### **SHARE THE FACTS – if your name it you will tame it!**

It is important to be prepared to speak to the facts associated to risk and explain this to your children at a level they are able to understand. Excessive detail is not required just the basic facts on how it might effect them. Limit their exposure to news feeds and social media as children can easily misinterpret something they have seen or read. Encourage them to come to you if they have any questions and together you will get the correct answers. Having accurate information helps regains a sense of control and mastery over the situation. Remember to be a good listener and encourage their questions.

<http://theconversation.com/coronavirus-qandas-answers-to-7-questions-your-kids-may-have-about-the-pandemic-133576>

### **PRACTICE WITH YOUR CHILDREN CORRECT HAND WASHING**

Explain how important hand washing is to keep us all safe and show them the best way to wash your hands. Make it a fun experience making up short songs that ensure a good wash. Have a good supply of hand soap with kid appeal if you can get it! Teach them how to cough in their elbow and how to use Kleenex to cover spray.

### **PROVIDE REASSURANCE**

Reassure children they are safe and that it is the job of adults to do what is best to keep them safe. Point out how our government is doing a good job in supporting us and that is why the schools are closed. Very smart doctors and other health professionals are giving us the best advice they can and we should follow the directions they give us even though it may not be fun. Explain that sleep overs are not a good idea as we don't know who has been exposed so that is why we are all staying home so we don't give it to one another.

Tip sheet on how to talk to children

[https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/pep20-01-01-006\\_508\\_0.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/pep20-01-01-006_508_0.pdf)

## **NORMALIZE AND VALIDATE FEELINGS**

Be sure and validate any feelings they express and assure them that being worried and fearful in this situation is normal and that we all have those feelings. Explain it is important to talk about them and to develop plans to cope. Discuss with the child what helps them in these situations and remember each child is a little different in what comforts them. You can offer suggestions but let the child tell you if they can.

## **HAVE A PLAN**

Develop as a family a plan on how you are going to manage the school closure, how to support and maintain contact with grandparents, how you are going to get supplies, who the children can associate with in the neighbourhood or what restrictions there may be. How can they connect with their friends? Explain the differences between social isolation, quarantine and social distance and when which one would apply.

<https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/helping-kids-cope-with-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

## **KEEP UP REGULAR ROUTINES**

Children experience a sense of safety and security when regular routines can be established. Children have had all of these activities taken away, like hockey games, dance lessons or performances, and music lessons and feeling a sense of loss. Set up a routine that if possible continues these activities but on a smaller scale. They still need to practice as this will not last forever. Create if possible a schedule of learning activities that mimics school routines and/or build in fun activities that encourage creativity. Set aside a time for reading. There are excellent reading aloud books and videos for younger students, that address worrying.

Wilma Jean and the Worry Machine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqAijfP99Ng>

Jacks worry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ0wyzjr5mq>

## **CREATE A LIST WITH YOUR CHILDREN OF FUN THINGS TO DO**

Engage them in creating a fun list of activities to do. This might be the opportunity to coach them on how good boredom is! Children need to be encouraged to engage in their own undirected play and downtime. Outside play in nature has a healing effect and brings down stress levels. Children also like to contribute and you may have to work at home. Set up a chore jar with rewards and share with them how helpful it will be to you as you must still work. Praise and reward the efforts!

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU DO NOT THINK YOUR CHILD IS COPING WELL**

Most of the local community agencies are providing phone and tele-health support and are encouraging people to reach out when they are concerned. Professional services can be provided in different ways on the short term so important that you reach out for support.

Please see our board website for contact information connected to our counselling team or email our Social Workers at

Hands the family help network is the local Children's Mental Health Centre for our regions.

<https://thefamilyhelpnetwork.ca/> crisis line 1-844-287-9072

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868

<https://kidshelpphone.ca> for on-line chat

Text: 686 868

Prepared by: NNDSB Mental Health Lead