



### COVID Stress



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

This is a stressful time for all of us, including our children. In general, kids are more stressed than they have been in the past. Recent reports show they are even more stressed out than adults (<https://bit.ly/3fbweUX>). For them, the added pandemic stress compounds their already high anxiety due to the new worry about illness and the changes to routine from this pandemic.

COVID-19 stress is real, and kids are feeling it. They are affected by what they hear about the pandemic and what they observe in parents who are adjusting to work changes or financial worries. They are also adapting to school changes and the loss of contact with their peers.

#### Tips for COVID stress

##### Household stress

An increase in financial, relational and health-related stress increases the risk for child abuse, and this is a stressful time.

When people are worried, they are more likely to lash out at those around them. Financial strain and confinement at home are causing spikes in domestic violence. This is a global problem.

According to a new report published by the United Nations Population Fund, there could be an estimated 31 million new cases of domestic violence globally if the coronavirus lockdowns continue for six more months. <https://bit.ly/2YIYzlc>

If you know a family is under excessive stress, you could provide a virtual ear to listen. Moral support can make a big difference. Or offer household help, such as food pickup, to ease the strain for people feeling stressed out and stretched too thin.

If you suspect child abuse, call the police or Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4AChild), [www.childhelp.org/hotline](http://www.childhelp.org/hotline). Don't hesitate. Children need to be protected.

If you are worried about your stress, get tips from Parenting in a Pandemic: Tips to Keep the Calm at Home: <https://bit.ly/2SrGhv7>

##### Resources for individuals and families

If you need financial support or know someone who does, there are resources and programs to help people through this tough time.

An estimated 135-140 million people in the U.S. were poor or low-income, according to a study by the Institute for Policy Studies in 2018. Of that number, nearly 40 million are children.

The rising unemployment rate from COVID-19 shutdowns has

increased that number, causing greater food insecurity and worry about household bills and rent. <https://on.mktw.net/2YkCrI9>

There are community and government programs that can help. Local food pantries are still operating, and schools are providing take-home meals. These government-funded meal programs are available for free to any child under 18. Check your school website for more information about meal schedules and locations.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides money to low-income families based on income limits and household sizes. It is a federal program operated through each state. Find more information on the SNAP website: [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility).

Federal stimulus checks have been deposited or are being mailed to individuals and households that have filed tax returns in 2018 or 2019. The amount varies based on eligibility and household size. Check the status of your payment on the IRS website: [www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment](http://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment).

### **Helping kids cope with the stress of the pandemic**

Kids of all ages are impacted by the stress of the pandemic. For younger kids, it's important to keep parental stress from them, if possible. Listen to their concerns and reassure them when you can. Set a schedule for remote school work and help them maintain a healthy sleep schedule. Plan for physical activity through video workouts, dance parties, walks or playing in the yard.

For teens, the stress can be much greater as they understand more about the situation and have lost opportunities for high school milestones like prom and graduation. In addition, they are cut off from friends and peers and other essential social support at that age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has published resources for parents who are concerned about their teens. Here is a partial list of tips for teens.

**Create a new normal with a productive routine.** Stick to a schedule. Transition from online schoolwork to evening with a transition time at dinner. Set aside time for privacy and time to talk to friends.

**Communicate.** Talk about what is happening and feelings about the changes. Discuss the importance of following the social distancing and stay home guidelines. Discuss future plans.

**Stay connected safely.** Allow teens to connect with friends via phone, social media and video chat. Assist them with technology issues to ensure that they can stay in touch with friends.

**Keep active mentally and physically.** Help your teen find resources to stay healthy: online books from the library, video workouts, and virtual museum tours. This is a great time to explore interests that we haven't had time for. Encourage them to take a walk or a run outside. Watch movies and TV shows as a family.

Read more at <https://bit.ly/2yl3GaG>.