

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 www.cipmarin.org

2019-2020 News & Notes



April 2020 News and Notes **Sheltering At Home: Advice for Parents** **By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT**

Life as we knew it just weeks ago has been disrupted in countless ways. With some exceptions, Californians have been instructed to stay home, to shelter in place. Schools and businesses have closed, some employees now work from home, while others have been laid off. In response, many child psychology experts offer suggestions to help parents cope with these unprecedented circumstances.

Talk honestly with your children.

It's important to talk with your child about the coronavirus and the changes that have occurred because of it. "Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone," states child psychologist Janine Domingues, PhD.

Be mindful to keep the information you share developmentally age-appropriate. "Take your cues from your child. Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel."¹

It is not unusual for a children under stress to act out or tantrum more than usual. Patience and reassurance will help an anxious child feel more secure. Take time for extra cuddling and storytime.

Let your child know that you are taking precautions that will help you and the family stay safe. Show them what they can do to keep well, such as washing hands, and other hygiene. Jamie Howard, PhD, a child psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, notes, "Kids feel empowered when they know what to do."²

According to Brad Lindell, PhD, President of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, "Parents should limit children's access to online and television news

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 www.cipmarin.org

2019-2020 News & Notes



media. If children have ongoing access to information through these sources, parents have little control of what children are hearing.”³

Adults should also be mindful of their own media consumption. It is one thing to keep informed on current developments, but it can easily be overwhelming, even detrimental to one’s emotional well-being to be overly focused on the negative news.

Maintaining routines and structure is important.

Despite the many changes occurring, or even because of them, it is very important to maintain regular routines, especially meal times, waking and bedtimes. A nutritious diet, exercise and adequate rest are especially important now and contribute to emotional health as well as physical well-being.

“Consistency and structure are calming during times of stress. Kids, especially younger ones or those who are anxious, benefit from knowing what’s going to happen and when,” writes Rae Jacobson, in her article, “Supporting Kids During the COVID-19 Crisis.”

Make sure to build fun and play time into your day. Ms. Jacobson advises, “Incorporate new activities into your routine, like doing a puzzle or having family game time in the evening. . . . [Try] brainstorming ways to go ‘back to the 80s,’ before the time of screen prevalence.” These might include “arts and crafts activities, science projects, imaginary games, musical activities, board games, household projects, etc.”

Some families may want to create a schedule that every member knows and follows. This is especially useful when parents may be sharing childcare or home schooling tasks while also working from home.

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 www.cipmarin.org

2019-2020 News & Notes



You can promote a sense of teamwork by making sure every family member has one or more tasks to perform. Knowing they are contributing to the family's well-being can give even young children a sense of competence and empowerment.

Look for ways to give and receive support.

It is normal to feel a sense of powerlessness in the midst of events over which we have no control. Maintaining contact with family and support networks by phone and electronic means can offer a sense of connection for both adults and children.

Ms. Jacobson writes, "Let kids use social media (within reason) and Skype or FaceTime to stay connected to peers even if they aren't usually allowed to do so. Communication can help kids feel less alone and mitigate some of the stress that comes from being away from friends."

Set aside time for family meetings. This can be a time to go over practical matters such as schedules, but also a time to be together and allow family members to talk about feelings and how things are going. Again, it's important for children to know that it's okay to ask questions and talk about their concerns. It's also an opportunity for the family to participate in brainstorming and problem solving, and making plans.

¹ https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=READ%20MORE&utm_campaign=Weekly-03-16-20

² <https://www.aaets.org/helping-children-cope-emotionally-with-coronavirus>

³ https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=%20Parents%20Guide%20to%20Problem%20Behavior&utm_campaign=Weekly-03-16-20