

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



August 2020 News and Notes Most Important to a Child By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

Every year we learn more and more about what factors influence a child's emotional health. In recent years, experts have shed light on the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can negatively affect individuals' mental and physical health throughout their lifespan. Similarly, more is known today about what promotes individuals' resilience and self-sufficiency, which can mitigate against negative experiences and bolster inner resources to meet life's challenges.

In her article published online by *The Greater Good Magazine*, Dr. Diana Divecha identifies four "takeaways" from a substantial body of research:

"For 100 years, developmental scientists have studied how families and children respond to disasters, manmade and natural. From the Great Depression to Hurricane Katrina, from 9/11 to wars and historic migrations, we've learned a few things about resilience.

"Studies consistently show that certain conditions help children adapt well, and other conditions compound a child's distress—but the overall message is a hopeful one. Given some basic support and protection, our children have remarkable strength and hardiness."

The first condition Dr. Divecha lists is for parents to limit children's exposure to the crisis. "If possible, shield children, especially the youngest, from media exposure so that you stay in control of the message. . . . Staying constructive and action-oriented can help mitigate children's chances of developing depression and feelings of overwhelm and helplessness."

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



The second takeaway involves caregivers: “Children are most resilient when they’re embedded in a network of social support: a parent, a caring parent figure, or siblings.” Dr. Divecha notes that when family members are not available, as in the case of essential workers during today’s pandemic, “other committed adults can pinch-hit as caregivers just fine.”

As the third takeaway, Dr. Divecha stresses children’s need for “Calm parents”: “It’s a challenge to bring your best self to this quarantine day after day, but your well-being is vital to you and your children. . . . Remember, the biggest lesson your children are learning from you is how to handle themselves in a stressful situation.”

Lastly, she states that, “connection to something greater than oneself—whether it’s a spiritual practice, cultural beliefs, or a sense of purpose—can help families and children orient their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.”

Each of these conditions has an important place in everyday circumstances as well: limiting excessive media or alcohol or drug use in the home; maintaining a strong social network; modeling appropriate behaviors; and connection to larger meaning.

Tips for Parents

After the first assertion, “Your relationship with your child is the most important thing in their world,” CIP’s “Tips for Parents” list continues: “Let your child know what a delight he/she is to you. Show and express your love for your child.”

Some simple activities to accomplish these, especially useful during the pandemic include:

Spend time outside.

Spend time reading and let them listen to books.

Have the whole family cook, clean and do chores together.

Spend unstructured time together.

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



Play games, do puzzles, build things, create art.

Explore the world together.

Create special play times where your child takes the lead; follow him/her.

During this stressful time, it is to be expected that children's behavior will change, responding to the increased stress and disruption caused by the situation. These may include problems with eating and sleeping, such as over- or under-eating, and nightmares. Difficulty with social interactions, such as withdrawal, excessive media use, trouble joining groups; other behaviors may include a short attention span, easily becoming upset, and frequent headaches or stomachaches. Often the answer to the problem is providing more loving attention and reassurance, an extra story or a cuddle.

If these or other behaviors cause you concern, please don't hesitate to consult with a professional. Remember that early attention can often prevent problems from becoming worse. Often an initial consultation is all that is needed.

Our "Checklists for Help" are available on our website <https://cipmarin.org/what-we-offer/education-prevention/>