

# Self-Care During the Time of Covid-19

## ***Why is it important that I focus on my well being?***

It is very important that you care for yourself and focus on your well-being during the time of COVID-19. Many parents believe that they would be behaving selfishly or indulgently by focusing on their own well-being and instead focus only on that of their child. However, focusing on your own well-being will actually help you to better care for your child. It is necessary that you keep yourself well in order for you to be able to ensure that you are physically, emotionally, and mentally capable of supporting your child. Additionally, as a parent, it is important to model for your child how to react to stressful situations by coping with your own anxiety in healthy ways.



## ***What are some self-care strategies I can incorporate into my daily routine?***

It is important to make time for yourself each day to practice self-care. Arrange for a quiet hour during which your child can engage in independent play or take advantage of times when your child is asleep. Practicing self-care looks different for everybody, and it is important to find self-care strategies that work for you. Perhaps there is an old hobby you would like to return to or a new hobby you would like to explore, such as knitting, art, baking, or reading. Maybe you like to participate in outdoor activities, such as walking, hiking, or biking, all of which can be done in accordance with state and local health and safety guidelines. If you enjoy exercising, many at-home workouts can be found online that require no equipment. These workouts can be found (for free!) on YouTube and other websites. If you are feeling lonely, connect with friends and family using technology. Other activities include meditation and mindfulness exercises (see below). Even an activity as simple as taking a shower or bath can be a form of self-care. Ask yourself, "What makes me happy?" and try to incorporate those activities into your daily routine.



## ***What is mindfulness? How can I incorporate mindfulness practices into my daily routine to alleviate stress?***

In essence, to practice mindfulness is to pay attention to what is happening in the moment and to accept those experiences and feelings without judgement. By acknowledging your feelings without being overwhelmed by them, you will be able to respond with patience, rather than with anger and frustration. Setting aside time each day to practice mindfulness may help to alleviate stress. Practicing mindfulness in the morning (before your child wakes up) is a great idea as it will set the tone for the rest of your day. There are also ways you can practice mindfulness throughout the day.

The following resources may be helpful as you begin to practice mindfulness. For examples of simple mindfulness exercises, click [here](#). For several ways that parents can be mindful throughout the day and a few mindfulness exercises for parents, click [here](#). For basic mindfulness exercises that can be done with younger children, click [here](#). For a one-minute relaxation activity that incorporates mindfulness techniques, click [here](#).



## ***I have had trouble maintaining my typical productivity level pre-COVID-19. How can I boost my productivity during the time of COVID-19?***

Expectations for being “perfect” during the time of COVID-19 can take a toll on parents. It is important to remember that you are enough. Quarantine is not a productivity contest, and it is unhealthy to “compete” with other parents in this regard. However, implementing some structure to your days may help you if you are struggling with issues of productivity. For some parents, creating a daily schedule may help them to maintain a sense of normalcy, manage stress, and boost their productivity. However, if you create a daily schedule, do not hold yourself to it religiously--give yourself some leeway. For many parents, creating a daily schedule may actually contribute to increased stress levels. These parents should instead consider creating an achievable task list each morning of what they need to do and what they would like to do. This will keep parents focused throughout the day, while allowing for a more flexible schedule. That being said, it is perfectly okay (and normal!) if you don't have activities planned every day for your child. It is unrealistic to expect parents, especially those working from home, to have time to do this each day. Similarly, it is okay to set the parenting bar lower during the time of COVID-19. For example, relax your child's screen time limits. If you make a parenting mistake, apologize and try again. And at the end of the day, remind yourself of your successes—no matter how small. Don't expect perfection from yourself or your child. Acknowledge that you are in survival mode right now and that you are not alone. Although it may not always be visible to you, other parents are struggling with these same issues.



## ***How can I maintain a healthy work-life balance while working from home?***

A common problem facing parents working from home is that their children do not understand that just because mom or dad is home does not mean they are available to play. It is important that parents set clear boundaries with their children regarding when they are available to play and when they have to work. For example, parents can create a “traffic light” system using a green piece of paper to indicate “play time” and a red piece of paper to indicate “work time.” During “work time,” parents can encourage their children to engage in independent play. For an article that discusses independent play and how to encourage it, click [here](#).



## ***How can I prevent problems from arising when sheltering-in-place with my co-parent?***

Some parents may decide to shelter-in-place with their co-parent during the time of COVID-19 in order to reduce their child’s risk of infection. There are several topics co-parents should discuss before sheltering-in-place together, including each parent’s expectations and how living together will work. For example, ask the following questions: What tasks will each parent be responsible for? What will change? What will stay the same? Additionally, in order to prevent fights between you and your co-parent from starting or escalating, pause and reflect on your feelings before responding to your co-parent. If you make a mistake, wait to apologize until both of you have calmed down. After apologizing for your mistake, let your co-parent know that you will work hard to do better in the future. Taking such measures should reduce the amount of problems that arise when sheltering-in-place with your co-parent, creating a more peaceful environment for your child.



## ***Am I exhibiting a "normal" response to the COVID-19 pandemic?***

It is especially important to monitor your mental health during the time of COVID-19 as you are most likely experiencing increased stress levels. During a situation as stressful as a pandemic, feelings of anxiety and grief are normal. Parents may feel stir-crazy, burned out, or tired. This is also normal, and even great parents experience these feelings. That being said, some individuals may be at risk for more intense reactions, such as the development of severe anxiety or depression. Risk factors for these intense reactions include, but are not limited to, pre-existing mental health problems, prior traumatic experiences or abuse, family instability, or the loss of a loved one. In extreme cases, it may be necessary to contact a professional. Many healthcare professionals are providing telehealth services, so you may even be able to seek help from the comfort of your own home.

## ***What can I do to reduce my anxiety regarding COVID-19?***

One step you can take to reduce your anxiety regarding COVID-19 is to be smart about the information you are consuming as well as the sources you are accessing information from. Make sure to consume news only from reputable sources, such as the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) website, linked [here](#), and try to limit your exposure to the news as excessive exposure may contribute to increased stress levels. Additionally, try to incorporate self-care strategies (see above) into your daily routine.

### **Sources:**

- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>
- <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/parenting-during-coronavirus-you-are-enough>
- <https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>
- <https://www.end-violence.org/articles/new-resource-pack-positive-parenting-covid-19-isolation>
- <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>