



Coping with Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What a strange time. Things are changing day-to-day, and there's a lot we don't know and can't control. Below are some suggestions for to help families deal with the stress and anxiety that is happening right now.

Coping Skills to Try

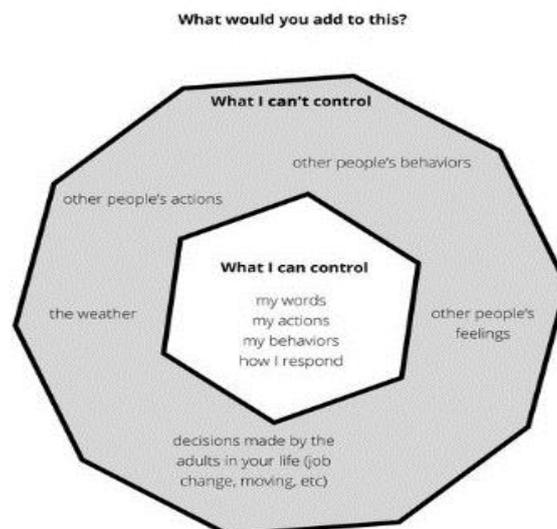
Label your feelings

First, recognise what you are feeling. Some days will be better than others. Some days, you'll feel scared. Others days you'll feel better. It may change throughout the day. That's completely understandable at this time. And different people will have different feelings and reactions to the same information.

Why should we bother labelling our feelings? Clinical research has demonstrated that one way to help regulate your emotions is to identify them. In other words, once you can identify your feelings, it becomes easier to manage them. As Dr. Dan Siegel says, "When you name it, you can tame it."

Acknowledge what you can and can't control

There are some things you can control and some things you can't. And situations like this one can highlight for us how many of the things we can't control. Here's a visual to help you understand the things you do have control over and the things you don't have control over in your life.



Instead of focusing on those things you have no control over, you can focus on what you CAN control, and that is YOU. You can control how you act, what you say, what you do, how you behave, how you respond to someone.

Think about the sentence: *How can I make this better...*

Make a Plan

Now that you are focused on what you can control, let's make a plan. You can use the problem-solving steps to make a plan to solve problems.

1. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

For example, I miss my friends.

2. GENERATE IDEAS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

The next step is to generate several ideas for solving an issue. Not all of them will work, but you're not trying to pick out ones that will and won't work during this step. Right now, it's just about generating ideas.

- Send them a card
- FaceTime my friends
- Email them
- Call Them
- Play a game online together
- Watch the same TV show and call each other to talk about it

3. PICK OUT A FEW IDEAS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM AND USE THEM!

Perhaps your friend doesn't have a phone, so you can't FaceTime. But maybe you can email or play a game online together, or call them to talk.

Do something fun

Play is a natural stress reliever for kids. I would encourage everyone to use their favourite distraction coping skills right now. Why? First, it helps your brain. When you are in fight, flight, or freeze mode, your emotional brain is in charge. By doing something distracting, you're giving your brain a chance to switch back so that the thinking part of your brain can come back online.

There are going to be times in your life when you have gone over things in your mind, you've identified all the things to explain how you are feeling, but you STILL can't get it off of your mind. That could be happening to you right now. You may find yourself perseverating on these

issues, and unable to focus on anything else - at that point, it makes sense to use a distraction skill. In my house, here are some of my favourite distraction skills:

- Puzzles
- Sewing
- Knitting
- Reading
- Watching TV
- Listening to Audiobooks
- Colouring

Do some movement

People always talk about exercise as a central pillar of mental health. Why? First of all, the human body is fantastic. It allows you to think, move, and interact with the world. It allows you to express yourself. How your body feels can have an impact on how you are emotionally feeling.

Exercise releases chemicals called endorphins. These “feel-good chemicals” trigger positive feelings in your brain. So by releasing endorphins, you are tapping into a natural way to improve your state of mind. After a long run or an exercise class, your body might be tired, but your endorphins are running high. You don’t have to run a 5k to get it, either. Any type of movement will do this.

You can take a walk around your local community while you practice social distancing. You can do some stretches at your house. You can do an online keep fit session. You can play video games that involve moving like Just Dance or Arms. Keep yourself active even during this time.

Practice Gratitude

There’s a lot of research around gratitude, which shows that being grateful can improve psychological health, reduce toxic emotions, and increase empathy. You can take a few minutes and write down a few things you are thankful for. If you find it challenging at first, focus on just 2 or 3 things. It doesn’t have to be significant. It could be that you’re grateful for how the sun feels on your skin, or that your friend makes you laugh, or that your mom made your favourite breakfast.

Or it could be big things like you’re grateful for your family, people who love you, or your support system. You can write them on a slip of paper and put them in a jar. That way, you can physically see them all. Or you could take strips of paper and make a paper chain of gratitude that you hang in your room. Or you can write it in a journal.