



# Wellness Today

For Parents & Families

## Keeping Mental Health Intact During a Crisis

During a crisis like the COVID-19 virus, it's important to take steps to stay physically healthy. But maintaining good mental health is also important.

### Tips for Maintaining Good Mental Health:

- Limit media. Reading all articles related to the crisis will only cause more stress. Try setting a specific time, such as once every other day, to read updates, and do so with the idea that it will help you know how to prepare, not tell you how much to panic.
- Do some good. As you are able, help those around you.
- As much as you are able, stick to your normal routine. Or, create a new routine and adapt to following it.
- Reduce stress by having a preparedness plan.
- Connect with others through calls, video calls, etc.
- Practice good health habits such as exercising, meditating, sleeping enough, and eating well.
- Do things you enjoy or use this time to explore other interests.

## Tips for Helping Your Children During a Crisis

During this time when the world is experiencing a crisis, you can be the source of comfort your children need.

Everyone reacts to crisis and stress differently. Below are some reactions to watch for that may indicate your children need help through a crisis.

### Reactions to Watch For:

- Regressing to outgrown behaviors
- Acting out or exhibiting more irritability
- Withdrawing or demanding more attention than usual
- Crying more than usual and at the slightest provocation
- Experiencing unexplainable aches and pains
- Eating unhealthily
- Showing a change in sleep patterns

Whether your children are reacting to the current crisis or to another crisis in their world, the following tips can help you better support your children.

### Tips to Help:

- Talk with your children about the crisis. Allow them to ask questions and then answer them simply and in a way they can understand.
- Talk with your children about their feelings. Are they feeling stressed? Worried? Listen to what they say, without judging. If talking doesn't seem to help, encourage them to draw or write about their feelings.
- Tell your children that their safety is important to you. Even though they are safe, let them know it's ok for them to feel scared or worried.
- Take care of yourself. In order to help your children, you need to help yourself. Practice good health habits and exhibit healthy ways to handle stressful situations. Your children can look to you to know how to cope with crises.
- Offer more attention to your children, such as giving back rubs, cooking comfort food or your children's favorite food, and giving more hugs.
- Spend more time together as a family.



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## Why Are These Apps Dangerous?

- Show users' location.
- Keep sent chats, photos, and videos private or hidden.
- Allow or invite sexting and cyberbullying.
- Hide true identity of other users. Users can lie about their age to gain access to the app or to try to connect with target users.

## How to keep your kids safe:

- **Manage app permissions** and privacy settings and set appropriate restrictions. Use **apps** or software to have more parental control over the content.
- Limit screen time and restrict phone time after bedtime.
- Caution kids to avoid friending or chatting with strangers.
- Educate yourselves. New apps are always coming out.
- Be on social media.
- Use apps to **manage** and monitor your kids' technology use.
- Converse with your children if they seem defensive, hide their screen from others, or suddenly change friends, online or otherwise.

## 21 Apps Parents Need to Know About

There's an app for nearly everything these days. Unfortunately, some apps are exploited and used negatively. Below are just **twenty-one apps parents need to look out for.**



**Snapchat:** Share photos and videos.

**Holla:** Meet people via video chat.



**Whatsapp:** Messaging app to communicate with people worldwide.



**Hot or Not:** Rate and meet up with other users.



**Whisper:** Social media app that lets you share secrets anonymously with strangers.

**Best Secret Folder:** Hides videos and photos.



**Monkey:** Live video app to connect users to strangers.

**Badoo:** Location-based dating and social media app.



**Bumble:** Dating app that lets women make the first contact.

**Calculator%:** Hides files, browser history, photos, and videos.



**Plenty of Fish:** Dating app that encourages chatting with strangers.

**Grindr:** Dating app, mostly for LGBT community.



**Skout:** Location-based dating app.

**Kik:** Messaging app mostly used for sexting.



**Ask.FM:** Ask strangers anonymous questions.

**MeetMe:** Dating app to connect users to people in their location.



**Live.Me:** Live-streaming app that shares location.

**Mocospace:** Social networking and dating app.



**Zoosk:** Dating app that matches users with strangers.

**HILY:** Dating app that helps users meet up with each other.



**TikTok:** Make and share short videos.



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## Making a Safety Plan

A safety plan for mental health is a list of coping strategies and people who can help. Safety plans are meant to help people safely through a crisis, such as when they feel suicidal, depressed, or overwhelmed.

### How to Make a Safety Plan:

- Think of times the plan would be used, such as after recognizing certain triggers or warning signs.
- Create a list of things that bring happiness or comfort.
- Make a list of things or people that make life worth living.
- Compile a list of people, complete with their contact information, who would be helpful to talk to during a time of crisis.
- Include numbers for national hotlines, local crisis numbers, or other ways to reach professional help.
- Plan how to make an environment safe during a crisis.

An example of a safety plan can be found [here](#). Consider sitting down with your children and helping them make their own safety plan.

## How to Make Goals to Improve Mental Health

Do your children feel depressed but want to feel happier, feel anxious but want to manage anxiety, or feel like they are worthless but want to feel confident?

For these and other mental health struggles, goal-setting is often an effective way to improve mental health.

### Benefits of Setting Goals:

- Accomplishing goals gives the brain a **boost of dopamine**, a “feel good” transmitter. In this way, goal setting can make someone feel happier. This is why many people make to-do lists; they feel happy each time they cross something off their list.
- **Performance is improved** as your children are supported, challenged, rewarded, and given feedback in their goal setting.
- Setting goals gives your children **valuable experiences and skills**, such as resilience, self-esteem, and independence, all of which contribute to healthy mental health.

While setting goals is great, there are some tips to consider to make sure the goals aren't actually detrimental to your children's mental health.

### Goal-Setting Tips:

- **Leave room for change.** Not reaching a goal can cause low self-esteem. Let your children know it's okay for them to reassess and update their goals often and make changes as necessary to help them meet their goals.
- **Make S.M.A.R.T. goals.** To avoid goals that are too hard to reach or end up causing more depression and anxiety, teach your children how to make goals that are **specific, measurable** (not vague), **achievable, relevant** (they actually want to do it), and **time-bound**.
- **Find support.** Check on their progress. Encourage them to share their goals with others, and praise their effort.

Whether or not your children struggle with their mental health, goal-setting can be a healthy way to improve and grow, and it's a great way to kick off the new year.



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## Is Vaping Really a Problem?

Vaping, or using e-cigarettes, has become an increasing problem over the past few years. Although in some ways vaping seems to have fewer health consequences than regular cigarettes, there are still risks and problems caused by vaping. Some problems with vaping include the following:

- Vaping uses nicotine, which is extremely addicting. Since teens' brains are still developing, they are more susceptible to addiction.
- Vaping can impact users' ability to focus.
- Vaping devices are easier to hide from parents and teachers because they don't have a strong odor and can be disguised as an everyday object, such as a flash drive.
- Using vaping devices increases the user's chance of switching to cigarettes.
- Vaping could increase users' risk of addiction to other drugs.
- Vaping exposes users' lungs to a variety of chemicals.

Talk with your children about the dangers of vaping.

## Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Tips

Abusing drugs can cause short-term issues (such as impaired driving) or long-term issues (such as serious health conditions). Parents are in a prime position to do everything they can to prevent their children from abusing drugs.

There are many steps you can take to help your children be drug free. For ideas for your child's specific age, click [here](#). For more prevention information and ideas, read this [parent's guide to drug prevention](#) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

### Prevention Tips:

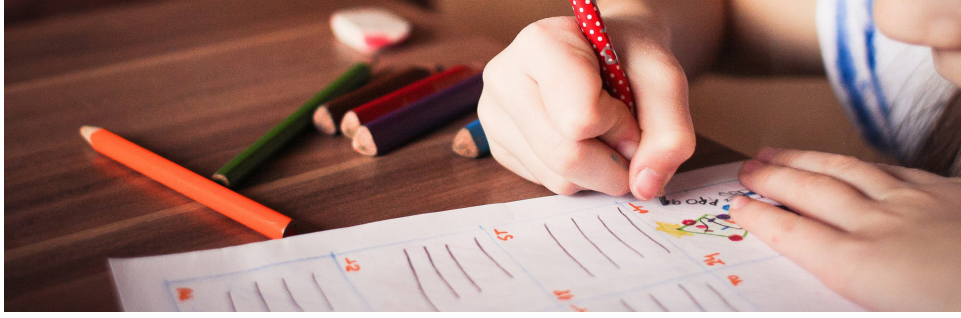
- Be a good example and keep drugs and alcohol away. If you do drugs or regularly drink too much alcohol, there's a good chance your children will too.
- Talk with your children about the dangers of drugs and correct any misleading ideas they have (e.g., "Marijuana won't hurt me").
- Avoid media that sensationalizes drugs and alcohol.

- Practice with your children different ways to say, "No!" to drugs.
- Encourage positive ways to cope when life gets hard.
- Encourage positive friendships and activities.

If you think your children may already be abusing drugs and alcohol, here are some tips on how to help them.

### Find Help:

- Calmly confront your children about their drug abuse. Gather physical evidence or note observations of their behavior to back up your concerns.
- Negotiate rules and consequences for drug use and enforce them.
- Enlist the help of a counselor if the conversation gets heated or isn't working.
- Use SAMHSA's National Helpline [1-800-662-HELP (4357)] for treatment referral and information any time or day of the year. Find a treatment option that will work best for your children.



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## All About Resilience

One part of stress management is resilience, or the ability to bounce back during hard times. Here are some ways you as a parent can help your children build resilience:

- **Guide them.** Instead of rushing to the rescue, let them make mistakes and work to solve their problems.
- **Encourage self-care** by helping them exercise, eat healthy, sleep enough, and practice [mindfulness](#).
- **Maintain a daily routine** that includes regular breaks from activities.
- **Help your children participate in service activities** to increase their sense of empowerment.

These are just a few ideas. For more ideas, try [apps](#) that help build resistance or talk with a mental health professional.

With the right tools, children can learn to cope and to use challenges to become stronger. Resilient children will be much more prepared and successful at facing uncertainty and future stressful situations.

## How to Recognize and Help Manage Stress

Though stress is a normal part of life, too much stress or poor management of stress can be detrimental to your children's well-being. If you recognize that your children are overly stressed, try some of the ideas mentioned in this article.

### Signs Your Child Is Stressed:

- Shows aggression.
- Withdraws from friends and family.
- Overreacts to little problems.
- Shows hyperactive behavior.
- Demonstrates eating or sleeping changes or disorders.
- Resists going or refuses to go to school.

### How to Help:

- **Communicate.** Ask your children about their day. Keeping the lines of communication open will help your children open up about anything that's stressing them out or that they are struggling with. Help them identify their stress and

work with them to find ways to manage that stress.

- **Avoid chaos and over-scheduling.** If your mornings are crazy and meals are eaten on the go, it may be time to re-work morning routines (such as waking up earlier) or cutting one or two things out of your children's schedules and instead adding in some down time for your children. As much as you can, make home a calm place to be.
- **Set more time aside for sleep.** Sit down with your children and figure out a bedtime plan that allows for sufficient sleep. Sleep is essential in combating stress.
- **Model and practice coping strategies.** Children usually pick up on their parents' stress. Try to model healthy stress management, such as exercising, eating healthy, or listening to calm music. Practice deep-breathing exercises with your children and encourage them to keep a stress journal that tracks stress, your children's feelings, and what helps/helped them feel better.



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## What is the SafeUT App?

The SafeUT App is a crisis chat and tip line service available to the state of Utah. Through chats or calls with licensed clinicians or confidential tips to school administrators, the app provides real-time crisis intervention for youth who are struggling or who know someone who is struggling.

The app is meant to help anyone with emotional crises, grief, relationship problems, bullying, mental health struggles, suicide-related issues, or any other life challenges.

Some key features include:

- Free and confidential help available 24/7
- Licensed clinicians to provide counsel, offer support, refer, or, in cases where the caller is believed to be in danger, alert emergency services.
- Ability to include videos or pictures in any tip submission
- Compatible with Apple and Android devices



## How to Help Bullies and the Bullied

Bullying is unwanted, repeated, aggressive behavior toward someone, including making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, purposefully excluding someone from a group, and harassing someone online.

Bullying can affect everyone and cause problems for those involved. Take a stand against bullying, whether your child is bullying or being bullied.

### If Your Child is the Bully:

- **Communicate.** Talk with your child and let him or her know bullying behavior will not be tolerated.
- **Find out why.** Bullies are not just “bad kids.” Often-times, there are underlying problems (such as low self-esteem) that lead to bullying. The “why” is not an excuse for the behavior; rather, it helps you know how to discipline (without shaming) and work to teach your child new skills that avoid bullying.

- **Support the school’s discipline.** This teaches your child about consequences and that you will not rescue him or her from the pain that comes with the consequences of bullying.
- **Encourage your child to make it right** (e.g., apologize) and **continue to monitor** his or her behavior for any future bullying.

### If Your Child is Bullied

- **Communicate.** Try asking, “I’m worried about you. Are there any kids at school who may be picking on you or bullying you?” Don’t overreact if your child’s answer is yes; instead, let your child know it isn’t his or her fault and that you are there to help.
- **Alert the school.** Talk with your child’s school or teacher(s) and come up with a solution to stop the bullying. Avoid confronting the bully or his or her parents.
- **Follow up.** Talk with your child and the school to ensure that the bullying has stopped. If it hasn’t, try the methods at [StompOutBullying.org](http://StompOutBullying.org).



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## Resources for Additional Help

**Mental Health America (MHA) Back-to-School Toolkit** provides free resources, information, and tools.

**MHA Anxiety Test Screening Tool** can help determine if your child has anxiety.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** offers information regarding mental health conditions and support groups for families.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (English and Spanish) 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress.  
1-800-273-8255

**Crisis Text Line** is the free, 24/7, confidential text message service for people in crisis. Text HOME to 7417414



## New School Year, New Emotions Helping Kids Conquer Anxiety

A new school year can bring many emotions, including anxiety. Anxiety is a common feeling of nervousness or worry. When those feelings stop your children from having fun or doing normal activities, they may need help reducing their anxiety.

### How to Help

- **Breathe.** Practice calming breathing together by taking slow, deep breaths.
- **Challenge negative or irrational thoughts** by having your children ask themselves questions such as “What evidence is there that makes this thought true or not true?” or “If it did happen, what could I do to cope?”
- **Plan.** Help your children prioritize and break down tasks into smaller, doable steps.
- **Be calm.** Model confident and calm behavior for your children.
- **Establish an at-home routine.** Schedule time for

homework, fun, meals, and a bedtime routine.

- **Support a healthy lifestyle.** Provide healthy meals and time for physical activity. Maintain an appropriate curfew so your children get enough sleep.
- **Identify thoughts and name emotions.** Describe to your children what you observe and ask in a clarifying manner if that is what is occurring. Asking if, rather than telling what, your children are feeling helps them develop greater ability to name and tame their emotions. For example, “I see you frowning and not talking much. Are you feeling sad?”
- **Communicate.** Set aside time to talk one-on-one with your children. Connect emotionally by listening and giving eye contact. Validate concerns and avoid lecturing.
- **Get help.** Talk to teachers about any concerns you have about your children. If you are concerned your children have an anxiety disorder, talk with a counselor, doctor, therapist, or other mental health expert.