



Supporting You and Your Child's

Emotional Wellbeing

Brought to you by:

Child Development Unit

Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute

Dear Parents,

Many of you may feel that you have not done the best for your child during this circuit breaker period. For example, you may feel..

Worried

about your child's learning, behaviour and health

Guilty

for not spending enough time with your child due to work or losing your temper at him/her

Frustrated

when your child misbehaves or does not cooperate

Ashamed

for shouting or hitting your child, or having negative thoughts about him/her

Embarrassed

by the amount of screen time your child is getting

Overwhelmed

with trying to juggle work, family, your child's school work and household chores

You are not alone!

Everyone is experiencing different levels of disruption to our lives during this time.

Like you, many parents are feeling overwhelmed even if they do not show it. We are all learning to balance different roles such as being a teacher, a cook, an employee and a housekeeper. Often, we expect ourselves to be the best at every role we take on.



Here are some points for you to remember:

1. It is ok to **lower your expectations** during this period.

2. Your **main role and identity** is a parent.

When you feel overwhelmed, always remember that you are firstly your child's Mummy or Daddy.

3. Your child's and your **emotional wellbeing** are more important than his/her academic success.

The time that you invest into the emotional wellbeing of your child and yourself is time well spent. Children learn best when they feel safe and loved. On the other hand, they will have difficulties learning well if they feel stressed, upset or insecure.

4. Be **kind** to yourself.

There is no perfect parent. Every parent makes mistakes. Forgive yourself when you think you have made a mistake and concentrate on doing better next time. Do not compare yourself to other parents – *you* are the best parent for your child! You are doing the best you can for your child, and you know them the best.

Supporting Your Emotional Child

Your child's feelings matter!

When your child is worked up, it is harder for him/her to listen, understand and cope. This may cause him/her to behave in ways that you find challenging. Here are three steps you can take to help your child to process his/her feelings in an appropriate manner:



Comfort

Focus on comforting your child to make him/her feel calm, safe and loved. Every child has different ways they like to be comforted!

- Deep and tight bear hugs (child facing away from you)
- Slow rocking or swaying
- Being present by sitting with him/her quietly
- Singing rhythmically
- Fidget toys
- Listening to calming music e.g. instrumental
- Soothing smells e.g. lavender, vanilla
- Drinking water from a straw
- Using a comfort object e.g. pacifier, pillow



Acknowledge

Connect with your child by acknowledging his/her emotions and showing that you understand how he/she is feeling.

- Use a calm tone of voice when speaking to him/her
- Use words that reflect his/her feelings e.g. Say: *"I know you are upset right now."*
- Show that you understand e.g. Say: *"It is really difficult, isn't it?"*



Negotiate

When your child has calmed down, discuss the inappropriate behaviour and offer some alternative ways for him/her to express himself/herself. As you do this, continue to reinforce the limits that you have set. Reassure your child that you love him/her, but tell him/her that the inappropriate behaviour is not ok.

- Say *"I love you."*
- Talk about how his/her behaviour is making you feel e.g. Say: *"Mummy feels frustrated when you cry every time I switch off the television."*
- Offer choices and solutions e.g. Say: *"Next time, do you want to switch off the TV yourself or do you want to switch it off together?"*

Just remember that you **CAN** do it!

In the following pages, you will find ideas on how to support your emotional child in some familiar situations that you may encounter at home.

PLAYING IS SO FUN
THAT SOMETIMES
IT IS HARD FOR ME
TO STOP AND
LISTEN TO YOU.

I LOSE MY TEMPER
EASILY. SOMETIMES I
END UP SHOUTING
OR HITTING HIM.

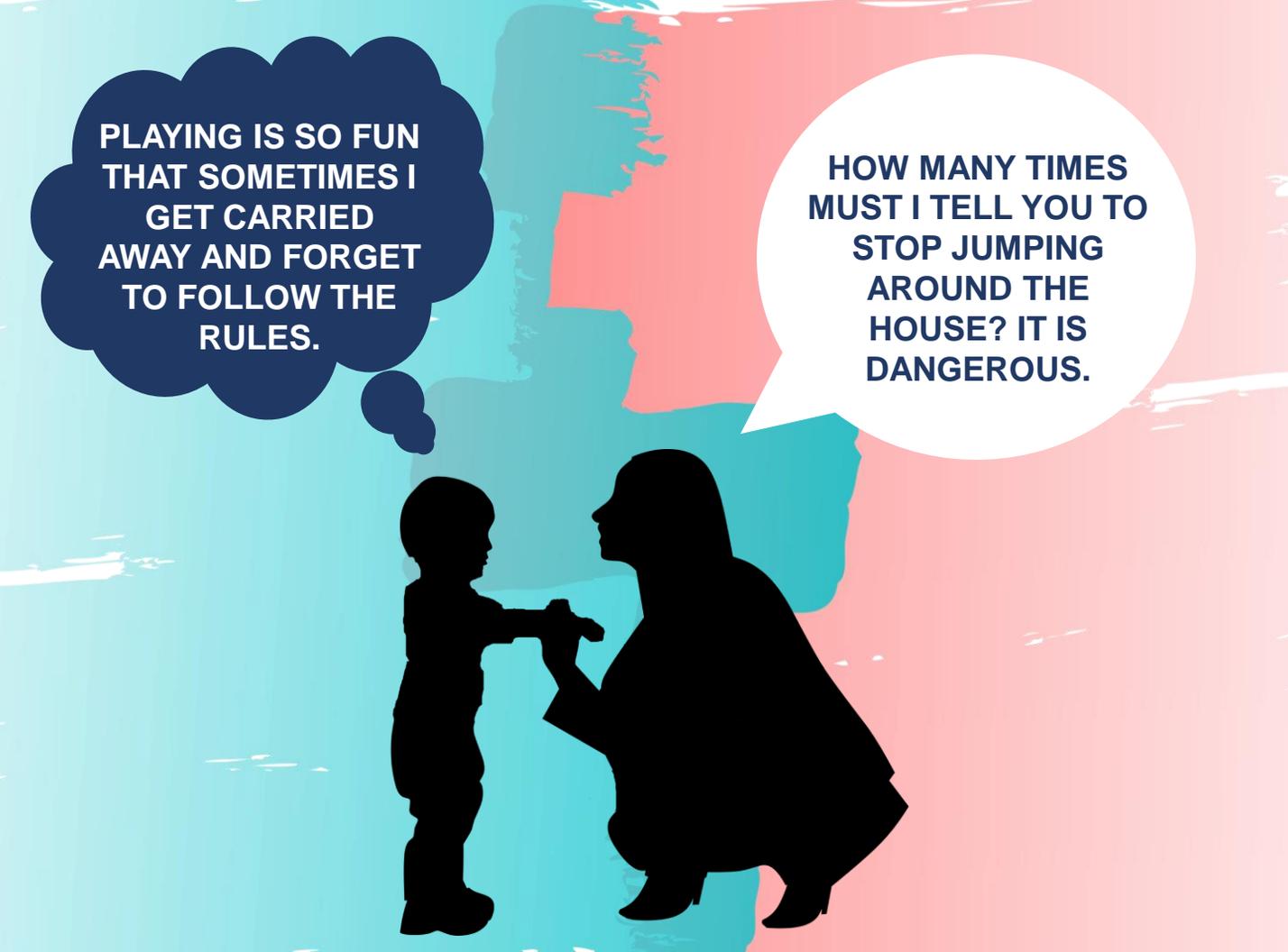


Try these with your child:

- When giving instructions, check that your child is listening first.
- Get down to face level with your child and make eye contact.
- Repeat your instruction in a calm voice.
- Tell him/her the consequences of not listening.
- If he/she does not listen, carry out the consequence - expect resistance but remain calm and firm.
- If your child listens, praise him/her.

Try these for yourself:

- Be aware of things that can affect your mood and ability to stay calm.
e.g. sleep, nutrition, activity level, work time vs. rest time
- When you feel like you are losing your temper, take a deep breath and model positive behaviour.
e.g. Say: *"I need to cool down. I am going to my calm down corner."*
- After you have calmed down, model social problem solving by apologising to your child and telling him/her how you are feeling.



PLAYING IS SO FUN
THAT SOMETIMES I
GET CARRIED
AWAY AND FORGET
TO FOLLOW THE
RULES.

HOW MANY TIMES
MUST I TELL YOU TO
STOP JUMPING
AROUND THE
HOUSE? IT IS
DANGEROUS.

Try these with your child:

- Set clear and specific boundaries on where and when he/she can move around the house safely.
e.g. Say: *"you can crawl under the bed."*
- Schedule in movement breaks for you and your child.
e.g. create and plan an obstacle course with your child, dance party, jumping jacks, push ups, yoga, animal walks

Try these for yourself:

- Ask yourself: Did my child have enough movement today?
- Remember that your child needs to move to learn and thrive.
- Help your child to know when to stop by using words and gestures.
e.g. put your hand up and say: *"STOP"*

**MUMMY IS AT HOME
AND NOT AT WORK!
I WANT HER TO
PLAY AND TALK
WITH ME.**

**EVERYONE NEEDS MY
ATTENTION AT THE
SAME TIME! I FEEL
OVERWHELMED.**



Try these with your child:

- Use a picture timetable to show your child when you can give him/her your full attention.
- Create a sign and ask him/her to take a number and wait (see example below).

Mum is busy

Please take a number and wait

1

2

3

Try these for yourself:

- Prioritise what is important to you.
- Make sure that everyone is safe and their basic needs are met.
- Set your child and yourself small and realistic goals that both of you can accomplish daily.
- Share the household and family responsibilities with other family members.
- Remind yourself that you are a good parent who is doing your best in a very difficult situation.
- Celebrate small victories daily.
- Make a daily list of what you did well.

YOU TALKED TOO QUICKLY AND SAID TOO MANY THINGS, I CANNOT REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID.

YOU DO NOT LISTEN OR DO WHAT I SAY UNTIL I SHOUT AT YOU.



Try these with your child:

- Give instructions effectively:
 - Use 'do' instructions instead of "don't".
e.g. Say: "sit on the sofa" instead of "don't jump on the sofa"
 - Wait for your child's response. Do not walk away too soon.
- Use gestures or pictures to show your child what you want him/her to do.
- Ask your child to repeat what you said to check if he/she understands.
- Let him/her know that a consequence will follow if he/she does not listen.

Try these for yourself:

- Remain calm and firm.
- Use a calm voice when giving instructions.
- Be careful not to get carried away by your emotions.
- Expect resistance when you carry out the consequence.
- Praise your child with a smile and happy tone of voice when he/she listens.
- Be aware of your child's abilities.
e.g. use simpler language if your child does not understand



I AM BORED. I HAVE NOTHING TO DO. TV IS FUN AND INTERESTING TO ME.

SHE KEEPS THROWING A TANTRUM, THE ONLY WAY TO STOP HER IS TO LET HER HAVE TV TIME.

Try these with your child:

- Have a schedule of planned activities.
- Involve your child in the planning and allow him/her to choose some activities.
- Write down a behaviour contract with your child and include a reward for following the agreement (you can make the written agreement an art and craft activity).
- Encourage quiet play time and reward him/her for doing so.
- Let your child video call his/her friends at times.

Try these for yourself:

- Set what you think are reasonable limits during this time.
- Stick to the limits you have set and remain calm.
- Ignore negative behaviour as long as your child is still safe. e.g. whining, lying on the floor
- Praise your child if he/she follows your instructions.

An illustration showing a silhouette of a woman on the right pointing her finger at a silhouette of a child on the left. The woman's thought bubble is white and contains the text 'HE IS MAKING ME ANGRY ON PURPOSE.' The child's thought bubble is dark blue and contains the text 'MUM IS ALWAYS BUSY. SHE WILL ONLY PAY ATTENTION TO ME WHEN I BEHAVE THIS WAY.' The background is a mix of light blue and yellow washes.

**MUM IS ALWAYS
BUSY. SHE WILL ONLY
PAY ATTENTION TO
ME WHEN I BEHAVE
THIS WAY.**

**HE IS MAKING
ME ANGRY ON
PURPOSE.**

Try these with your child:

- Give positive attention by praising him/her for desirable behaviours.
E.g. Say: "I like it when you and your sibling are playing together nicely."
- Let your child know how long your meeting or phone call will last.
Use a timer or clock show him/her the duration you need.

Try these for yourself:

- Shift your mindset.
 - If you already think that your child is intentionally annoying you, you are more likely to respond negatively.
 - Your child may be doing it on purpose as he/she may think that having negative attention is better than no attention at all.
- Try to understand your child's behaviour.
Your child may be missing his/her friends in school or playground time, or he/she just made a mistake.



I DO NOT KNOW
HOW TO DO MY
WORK.

WHY CAN'T
YOU JUST DO
YOUR
WORK BY
YOURSELF?

Try these with your child:

- Encourage your child to do what he/she can first.
- Mark the parts he/she need help with for later.
- Give frequent movement breaks in between work tasks.
- Make learning fun.
e.g. draw pictures for friends, use Play-Doh to form letters
- Ensure the environment is conducive.
 - Bright lights
 - Switch off distractions
 - Have a designated table and chair
- Stagger learning time between your children if possible.

Try these for yourself:

- Lower your expectations.
e.g. 15 to 20 mins of work time at one go for a preschooler is enough
- Pick a time when your child is calm to do work.
e.g. avoid timings when your child is likely to be tired or hungry
- Think of ways to incorporate learning into your child's daily routines.
You can find some ideas on how to do this in our [NUH CDU Activity Resource Book](#).

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