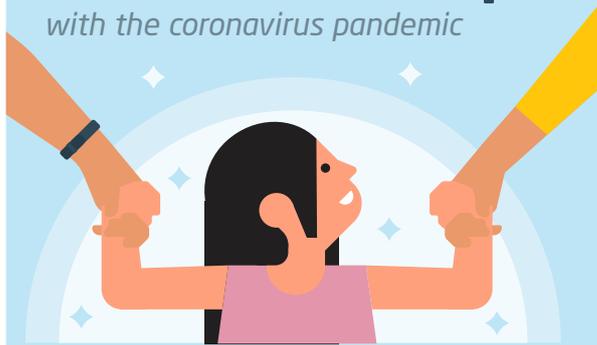


Helping families and children cope

with the coronavirus pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted everyone's daily lives.

Dr Kang Ying Qi, Consultant at the Child Development Unit, National University Hospital shares some ways families and communities can better care for children in these challenging times.

Identify children who are more vulnerable to stress

How a child responds to the pandemic depends on their temperament, personal experiences, medical conditions and how their caregivers respond to their worries.

Children with adverse childhood experiences, existing mental health or medical conditions, and special needs may require additional support during these times.

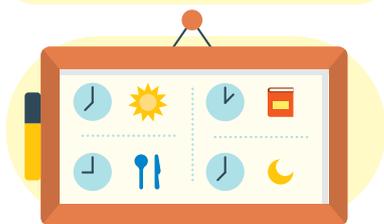


Spot the signs of anxiety

Children who are disturbed may exhibit changes in eating and sleeping patterns, difficulty in concentrating, tantrums, mood changes or difficulty in separating from parents.

Some children might become reticent and quiet, preferring to avoid the topic while others may ask incessantly about the topic.

Maintain the routine



Having a predictable schedule can help children cope better with inevitable changes.

Giving your child control over small decisions can also help them feel more empowered amidst the changes.

Help children 'navigate' parents' work-from-home situations

Explain household rules when a parent is working from home, or pre-prepare materials to occupy the child. Doing so proactively will reduce disruptions from the child.

Set aside scheduled time for the parent to fully engage with the child.

To prepare for possible interruptions, children can be informed of a visual signal to not disturb the parent beforehand.



Stay connected



Children should speak or play with their friends and extended family members, just as they would prior to the pandemic.

Help your child stay connected with others virtually while practising social distancing measures.

Talk to children about the situation

Parents should first address their own fears so that they can have a calm discussion with their child.

Social stories are useful tools when trying to explain concepts that may be difficult to understand, such as 'pandemics' and 'safe distancing' through pictures and words.



Avoid inundating children with excessive information or exposing them to graphic images and details about tragic circumstances.

Family members should refrain from discussing their own concerns around children. Scare tactics will increase a child's fear around this pandemic.

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