

## Parenting in a Pandemic: tips on managing your child's stress

It is hard to believe that something like this is happening and we are amidst a pandemic with no end in sight.

I have read about historical large-scale pandemics before, like The Black Plague and The Spanish Flu, but never in my life dreamt of coming face-to-face- with one myself. While a lot of experts are talking about and stressing the importance of maintaining your mental health during a pandemic, very few are talking about its impact on kids.

Being a mom to two daughters and working full-time (from home of course!) has never been so difficult, thanks to the COVID-19. I am sure many parents would empathize when I say it is extremely challenging to keep kids occupied at home. You ought to find ways to limit screen time and focus on healthy eating for your family, while simultaneously managing other chores and office work - we have all become great multitaskers!

Today, I am penning down a few tricks that helped my kids stay sane during these insanely challenging times:

### **1. Teach your children about the pandemic:**

Talk to them about the pandemic as clearly and honestly as you can without scaring them. Be clear in your communication and teach them about the precautions that your family is going to follow until this pandemic is over.

### **2. Plan virtual calls with family and friends:**

You can plan weekly video calls with family where your child can virtually meet and interact with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Try to plan to video call their friends. These times call for family's love and care, virtual meetings help in maintaining that connection with loved ones.

### **3. Support your child:**

Recognize your child's feelings. Your kids are missing their school, cannot meet their friends, cannot go out and play, and cannot eat at their favorite restaurant - all this is immensely hard for a child and can easily cause a lot of stress. Reassure them that you are experiencing the same feelings, so it is easier for them to talk to you and express their feelings.

### **4. Manage your anxiety and stress:**

We can pass on our stress and anxiety if we do not deal with it. Constantly talking and discussing the pandemic is not going to help anyone. Filter the plethora of information out there and calm yourself down before you answer any questions or talk to your kids.

### **5. Follow a routine:**

Children like routine. Structure their day in a way that keeps them occupied. Start with a wake-up routine, followed by getting dressed, eating breakfast, and then a morning activity. Then have snack time and schoolwork after that. End the day with an evening and bedtime routine.

### **6. Behaviour change - reward and discipline:**

You might find your child's behaviour has changed, and he/she gets upset easily, shows aggression, has frequent meltdowns. Use rewards to reinforce good behavior and redirect the "bad" behavior. You should recognize when they are just seeking attention, and ignore it. Time-outs are an effective way in these scenarios.

### **7. Family time:**

As a family, make sure to spend some quality time together. Make time to play a board game, such as Jenga, or watch a movie together.

### **8. Love and care:**

Tell them that you love them. Hug your kids more often. Know that hugs and cuddles reduce stress and anxiety in kids.

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**9. Teach them compassion and kindness:**

Reinforce these principles of compassion and kindness in your child. Lead by an example. Read them the stories and talk about community work. Positive stories help families stay positive during hard times.

I hope that these tips come in handy to you and can help in making your life a little better during Covid-19. And don't forget this is just a phase, and this too shall pass. I am going to end it with a famous saying by Robert H. Schuller, "Tough times never last, but tough people do."

