

# Promote and Practice Positive Coping in the Pandemic



## ■ Be a Role Model for Your Child

It's hard to encourage positive coping if you as a caregiver are not practicing it yourself. Walking outside, taking deep breaths, coloring, listening to music and limiting your exposure to the news are ways that you can help yourself to destress. By modeling appropriate behavior and explaining to your child the purpose of self-care, you will be able to help your child learn what works for your child. Start by asking your child about a favorite thing to do while at home and what helps to make your child feel calm and safe.

## ■ Encourage Open Communication

Let your child know that your child can come to you with questions or worries. If your child prefers an alternative method of expressing feelings or benefits from gathering thoughts first, encourage journaling. Journaling can also be beneficial for you too, caregivers!

## ■ Limit News Exposure

Taking a break from the news is important for both caregivers and children. We are surrounded by an abundance of ways to access the news, which can give conflicting information and heighten stress and worry. As you know, your child can sense and feed off of your stress. Though it is important to stay informed on this constantly changing situation, children are also absorbing and possibly misinterpreting what they are hearing. Be sure to get your news from reliable sources and engage your child in open discussions if it directly impacts your child.

## ■ Create a Safe Space

You and your child can choose or create a "safe space" in your home where your child can go to release emotions in a safe and controlled environment. Let your child know that all emotions and feelings in this time of uncertainty are okay. Encourage your child to journal, talk about feelings, engage in relaxation activities, listen to music, pound or bang on Play-Doh, etc. Caregivers are allowed to have a "safe space" too.

## ■ Practice Mindfulness

While it is easy to get wrapped up in thinking about all of the uncertainty surrounding what is happening right now, it is important that we remember to remain in the present. Mindfulness is purposefully being aware and connecting to the present moment with mind and body. A great way to practice mindfulness with children is engaging their senses. Some easy techniques are tensing and releasing muscle groups, belly breathing (like blowing bubbles), or making a mindful meal and focusing on the smell, taste and colors that you are eating. Some of these exercises may help remind you to pause and take time for you and your child to reconnect and be present in the moment.

## ■ Make a List Together of Fun Activities

Include your child when trying to come up with activities for each day. Your child may have great ideas or new things to try, like baking or a science experiment. Keeping your child involved in decision making helps to create a sense of control.