



## **Supporting Families and Children During the Covid-19 Outbreak**

Uncertainty is hard for most people, yet there are simple and practical ways to cope with even the most difficult situations. Research shows that coping with stress builds resilience and can make us stronger. People in our community and around the world are helping each other, working together, showing kindness, and trying to be creative in addressing the problems we are facing.

### **Here are some ways to help yourself and your family during this time:**

- Self-Compassion – Fear is a natural response to a pandemic such as this. Try to be kind to yourself if you are feeling more worried or anxious than usual.
- Self-Care – It remains important to engage in healthy and relaxing activities that you enjoy. Consider a wide variety of fun, intellectually stimulating, and physically active options such as reading for professional growth or leisure, cooking, practising yoga, exercising, meditating, and spending time in nature.
- Connection – Stay connected with family and friends through virtual visits.
- Routines – Keeping similar routines and developing healthy new routines helps provide predictability and a sense of safety for you and your family.

The COVID-19 pandemic may be a very stressful and frightening time for our children. While it is important to remember that fear and anxiety about disease is normal, excessive worry is not. There are many things we can do as parents to support our children during these extraordinary times. When talking to our children about the current situation, a solutions-focussed approach is helpful.

### **Things to keep in mind when having discussions with children include:**

- Many individuals and organizations (governments, doctors, nurses, schools etc.) are helping during the current situation.
- It will get better.
- Life will return to normal.
- Let's focus on caring for our family, friends, and community.
- Positive Focus – Try to shift the dialogue away from the negative and toward what we can be grateful for in this time.
- Talk and Listen and Model - Take the time to talk to your child or teen about COVID-19 in an age-appropriate way. Reassure your child or teen that they are safe, and share your own strategies for coping with stress. Model for them how to be resilient and health.

### ***Supporting All Children and Youth***



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- Routines are important and can help to create a sense of predictability and security.
  - Some examples of routines include scheduling daily academic time, outdoor activities, and family time.
- Focus on the moment. Mindful breathing is very helpful.
- Model calmness, routine, and a focus on family and friends.
- It is appropriate to provide a fact-based discussion on the changing landscape of COVID-19. This discussion should be done in a calm and reassuring tone conveying the message that we are safe. We take precautions, but we are safe. Listen, provide age-appropriate information and focus on prevention (frequent handwashing, social distancing etc.).
- Focus on the positive and encourage children to do the same. Rather than feeling stuck inside, for example, see it as an opportunity to focus on family and home.

### **Supporting Older Students**

- Limit social media and news consumption. Create a window of time to check the news together rather than watching it all day.
- Consult accurate information from reliable sources
- Limit exposure to the news;
  - Watching news that repeatedly emphasizes both the rapid spread of coronavirus and lack of effective treatment makes people feel anxious and disempowered. Anxious thoughts include those that suggest the worst case scenario and our inability to cope with that. This news coverage feeds that faulty thinking.
- Moderate the amount of gaming time.
- Eat as nutritiously as is possible. Make balanced meals you can prepare together.
- Try to ensure older students are getting enough sleep (sleepfoundation.org).

### **Supporting Younger Students**

- Younger students may show their stress in different ways, for example: crying, irritation, 'acting out,' reduced attention and concentration, regression to an earlier age such as bedwetting, and ceasing activities that they previously enjoyed.
- Here are some strategies to help reduce stress in younger students:
  - More time with trusted adults
  - Increased play time, inside and out (if possible)
  - Routines
  - Quiet times to read books, listen to music, do puzzles, and play board games
  - Adequate sleep

### **Mental Health**

- Children, teens or adults who have mental illness or addiction should continue to seek support.
- Many counsellors are continuing their work on the phone or online.
- Local supports in the community are ongoing, but support may look different. (see below for phone numbers)
- There are helplines and online tools and apps (please see below for a few ideas).
- Have a safety plan and ensure that youth and children know they are not alone.

**District Support Services | School District 46 (Sunshine Coast)**

PO Box 2148 – 6030 Lighthouse Ave, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0 | (604) 885-6782 | [www.sd46.bc.ca](http://www.sd46.bc.ca)



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### Phone Numbers/Crisis Resources

#### Local Information:

Mental Health Resources for Children and Youth are available during this time. Supports may look different, but they are still working to support families and children with mental health during this unprecedented time. Please use the links below for local resources and contact information.

[Sunshine Coast Youth Resources](#)

[Children and Youth Mental Health Resources for Sunshine Coast](#)

#### Provincial Resources:

- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868/<https://kidshelpphone.ca>
- Youth in BC – distress line: 1-866-661-3311/<https://youthinbc.com>
- <https://crisiscentrechat.ca>
- 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- 310-Mental Health – 310-6789
- [MindHealthBC](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- *Helpline for Children*: 310-1234 (toll free)
- [Kidsafe BC](#)
- *Emergency Response*: 911

#### Apps (Click on Hyperlink below):

- [Anxiety Canada- MindShift App](#)
- [Kelty Mental Health- Breathr App](#)

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### ***Supportive Resources – websites, apps, helplines and other phone numbers*** ***Please click on the Hyperlink Below***

- [Here to Help – BC – Covid-19 and Anxiety](#)
- [Centre for Disease Control – Mental Health and COVID-19](#)
- [Kelty Mental Health](#)
- [UNICEF – Mental Health & Teens for COVID-19](#)
- [Canadian Psychological Association-Fact Sheet: Psychological Impacts](#)
- [Harvard University- Managing Fears and Anxiety around COVID-19](#)
- [Teen Mental Health](#)
- [Anxiety Canada](#)
- [Bounce Back- Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Talking to Children about COVID-19- Parent Resource from National Association of School Psychologists](#)
- [Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus- Child Mind Institute](#)
- [CBC Kids News: Busting Myths about the Coronavirus](#)
- [Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): What to Talk About with Your Child](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority: Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)