

# QUICK BYTES

## TRAUMA NETWORK FOR CHILDREN



### 5 TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD OR TEENAGER COPE WITH COVID 19 RELATED DISTRESS

Brought to you by the PTSS team (KKH) • May 2020

COVID-19 has changed lives in an unprecedented way, and it is difficult to tell when or how things will return to normal. The uncertainty of these changes contributes to additional stress and anxiety that many are experiencing, including children and teenagers. They may experience worry, anxiety or frustration as a result of having to make adjustments to their routines and daily life such as not being able to go out to play or meet their friends and relatives.

Adults and caregivers can help children and teenagers cope with the stress related to COVID-19 with the following tips:

#### EAT WELL



- Ensure that their meals are balanced and eaten at appropriate times
- Prepare your child or teenager's usual snacks if possible. However, be careful not to over-indulge them either.
- Young children have a limited understanding of the world and may find it challenging in accepting if they are unable to enjoy their usual snacks. Offering them a simple explanation coupled with not more than two to three alternative choices may help.
- Ensure that your child or teenager drink sufficient water regularly throughout the day.



#### SLEEP WELL

Ensure that your child or teenager gets about 8 to 10 hours of sleep every night. Getting enough sleep will help your child or teenager better manage stress and uncomfortable feelings. Sufficient sleep and rest help children and teenagers focus and learn better.

Keep to a fixed sleeping and waking up routine even if they do not need to attend school or have no activities planned.

Refrain from allowing them to consume caffeinated snacks or drinks (e.g., hot chocolate, bubble tea) after 2pm

Practise a regular bedtime routine every night.

If your child and teenager becomes tired during the day, keep afternoon naptimes to not more than 20 – 30 minutes for improved mood, alertness and performance.

Keep the hour before bedtime screen-free. Do other relaxing activities with your child or teen instead (e.g. reading stories, doing light stretching, drinking a warm non-caffeinated drink)

Refrain from having stressful conversations with them a few hours before bedtime

#### STAY ACTIVE



- Schedule at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise activities for your child or teenager every day. You may even like to join them in the fun! There are many websites that provide a multitude of activity ideas for indoor exercises. Here are some that may be suitable and appealing to you and your children:

i) [www.glowyogakids.com/shine-on/the-force-awakens](http://www.glowyogakids.com/shine-on/the-force-awakens)

ii) [www.whatmomslove.com/kids/active-indoor-games-activities-for-kids-to-burn-energy/](http://www.whatmomslove.com/kids/active-indoor-games-activities-for-kids-to-burn-energy/)

iii) [www.verywellfamily.com/simple-kids-stretching-exercises-1257070](http://www.verywellfamily.com/simple-kids-stretching-exercises-1257070)

- Spend at least five minutes under the sun every day. This can be done by drawing up the curtains in the room when they are completing their homework, or getting them to water the plants, or other safe and creative ways you can think of!
- Encourage your child or and teenager to create art (e.g., painting, craftwork, writing poems, stories or journals). The process of creating a piece of art creates the space for emotional reflection and expression. Allowing children or teenagers to showcase their art and craft on social media, if they are agreeable, is a great way for them to stay socially connected while keeping safe distancing during this period.
- Some online resources from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) have support for teenagers coping with COVID-19:
  - i) **Youth Voices** #voicesofyouth  
<https://www.voicesofyouth.org/campaign/studying-home-due-coronavirus-how-young-people-around-world-are-keeping-their-mood>
  - ii) **Your Art: COVID-19 and youth mental health**  
<https://www.voicesofyouth.org/campaign/covid-19-and-youth-mental-health>
- Moving the body and allowing creative expression not only keep energy levels of children and teenagers up, but they also help them work off excess energy to focus and learn better.



#### STAY CONNECTED



- During this period, children and teenagers may feel upset about being unable to go out to play, or meet their friends. Encourage your child or teenager to share their feelings with you if they would like to.
- Encourage your child or teenager to stay connected with family members (e.g., grandparents, cousins) and friends by using video technology, email, or playing online games together.
- Set aside time to spend with your child or teenager. Get their suggestions about possible activities to do together.
- It is also normal that tensions may sometimes run high at home. Be kind and gentle with yourself, and your child or teenager.

#### USE SOCIAL MEDIA WISELY

- Monitor your child and teenager's exposure to COVID-19 related content on social media and media platforms if you notice that it makes them more distressed. This is especially so for very young children who may think that the crisis event is occurring repeatedly when they watch the same footages of the event in these platforms.
- Encourage your child or teenager to seek updates only from reliable sources of information (e.g., Ministries' websites, local news agencies). Remind your child or teenager that not every piece of information they see or hear on the internet are accurate. Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult if they have questions about what they read online.
- Children and teenagers may be curious about COVID-19. If so, tell them facts about COVID-19 that is appropriate for their developmental level. Be prepared to have difficult conversations about people falling ill or passing away due to the virus, and the importance of practising safe distancing and personal hygiene.
- Set boundaries for screen time and the use of electronic devices and internet. For example, having rules about how much time your child or teenager can spend on their devices, what they can use their devices for (e.g. learning, reading articles, video sharing platforms, social media), and who they can interact with online (e.g. communicating with friends and family is ok, but to be cautious when interacting with people they do not know online).

References:

<https://childmind.org/article/anxiety-and-coping-with-coronavirus/>

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronavirus/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronavirus/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2)



**Trauma Network**  
for Children



*The Stay Prepared – Trauma Network for Children (TNC) programme is a joint collaboration between KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and Temasek Foundation. It aims to enhance the psychosocial capability of the Singapore community to support children and youth after crises or traumatic events.*