

## 5 tips for helping your kids/teens through COVID-19

By Amanda Tipps

**Try to keep your family on somewhat of a schedule.** This will be especially helpful for online schooling done from home. Having a written out schedule helps keep expectations in check for everyone and can decrease conflict. I would even suggest having your kids help you write up the schedule too! More input = more buy in. Don't forget to allow time for mental breaks to decompress, just like they would have at school during lunch/recess/passing periods.

**Find a fun way to make up for cancelled events!** A lot of highly anticipated events have been cancelled, so try to substitute these with fun and out of the ordinary activities around the house or in the community. Ask your kids for ideas and don't be afraid to get creative with this, especially as more businesses begin to close. Here are a few examples to kick start your brainstorm: learn a new card game, break out the old jigsaw puzzles, plant flowers, build things with scrap wood in the garage, rearrange the furniture in their bedrooms, paint something and hang it on the wall, go for a walk around your neighborhood or even drive to a new one and do some exploring! Again, get creative with this and ask your kids for their input.

**Ask your kids how they're feeling about everything...** have they heard things about the virus from their friends? Have they seen things on social media that they didn't understand or that didn't make sense? Are they putting on a calm face but secretly freaking out underneath? Or perhaps they are actually freaking out! Rather than telling them what you want them to hear, start the conversation by figuring out where their thoughts are at and proceed from there. Kindly engage with any misinformation they may have heard and meet their fear with comforting truths.

**If your kids are fearful let them know that things are a little scary for you too!** It's okay to be human, and it communicates to our kids that it's okay to feel emotions and to express them in a healthy way. Address their fear and then encourage them with a positive reminder of truth. For example: "I know you're scared about things, Mom is a little scared too. But one way to help keep us healthy is by washing our hands so that's why I've been asking you to do so." There's a healthy middle ground between dumping your fears on your kids, and expressing your emotions to them in a way that models for them what it looks like to be human. Aim for this middle ground and if at first you don't succeed remain calm and try again!

**Take care of yourself so that you can be present.** This may be the most important because kids pick up on your stress and anxiety sometimes before

you even notice it. Making sure that you're okay first typically means that you'll be better equipped to help your kids manage their own emotions. Remember the airplane instructions to put your own mask on before assisting those around you... that's exactly what you're doing here. Carve out some time in your day to do what you need to do: call your friends, text your support system, FaceTime your loved ones, etc. And don't forget that a lot of counselors are able to offer a virtual platform for therapy and can help make sure that you're doing alright. Utilize the electronic resources at your fingertips to get what you need, and then put your devices aside to be present with your kids. Your full presence and engagement is going to help your kids to be resilient through this season, and shape them to tackle the next obstacle that comes their way.