



COVID-19 : Let's protect our mental health too !

Caring for children

Like adults, children (regardless of their age) can be concerned and worried about the pandemic situation. Maintain a kind and stable family atmosphere to nurture the sense of security your child needs. Below are some tips to help you cope with the situation in a healthy way:

➤ **Actively listen to your children**

- Take your child in your arms, speak with her/him, listen to her/him;
- Be attentive to signs of anxiety “Mom, my tummy hurts”, “Dad, my teddy is sad”, “Mom, where are all my friends?”;
- Let your child express her/his feelings and what he/she is going through with his/her toys, drawings etc.;
- Adapt to their pace and stay calm;
- Use family time around the dinner table to answer their questions (T.V and cellphones off, not too much background noise);
- Even if you are working, take time to be with your children, spend a few minutes with them right before you are leaving/when you are coming back, it will reassure them.



➤ **Explain the situation with simple words/a language adapted to your child's age**

- Use simple explanations, be clear, precise and practical;
- Reassure them and normalize emotional reactions (fear, irritability etc.);
- Use images, videos, skits or stories;
- Teach basic hygiene rules/prevention measures and remind them often.



➤ **Avoid passing your adult fears to your children**

- Make a difference between your own fears and your children's fears;
- Nurture positive attitudes and behaviours (to maintain a pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere at home);
- Try to stay calm and positive with your children;
- Talk about your emotions and your fears with other adults;
- Avoid or limit certain discussion topics when children are around;
- Take it one day at a time, try to let go of things and take care of yourself (see document “Self-care”).





➤ **Find and stick to a routine (which remains flexible)**

- A routine will help preserve a sense of security for your child;
- Maintain a clear schedule for waking up/bedtime hours and meals;
- Plan structured activities but also allow time for unstructured play and relaxation.



➤ **Have fun with your children**

- Take this opportunity to do family activities together;
- Make a schedule and then put your children in charge of finding an activity (each one in turn).



➤ **Limit media exposure**

- Avoid watching the news all the time with your children;
- Instead, watch programs adapted to their age and that they enjoy.



➤ **Focus on their creativity and on their strengths**

- Involve children in organizing family life (small responsibilities, finding activities on the Internet, make drawings that will be sent, etc...);
- Encourage their creativity and recognize their strengths.



➤ **Encourage them to maintain social contacts via online platforms/the phone**

- Encourage your children to stay in touch with their circles of friends or family members using digital technologies (e.g. Snapchat, FaceTime, emails, phone calls);
- Remind them about the safety rules for using the Internet and how important it is to denounce inappropriate online behaviours.

Keep an eye out for signs of distress. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness! If you feel overwhelmed, for whatever reason, if you/one of your loved ones is in distress, if a child is in danger or needs protection, you can use any of the resources below:

- **Psychosocial Help Line: Info-social 811**
- **Youth Protection: 1-866-463-0629**
- **Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-866-APPELLE (277-3553)**
- **Essential services directory: <http://ressortgim.ca/covid-19/> (in French)**
- **Mental Health resource Guide for the Gaspé Coast and the Magdalen Islands : https://casa-gaspe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mental-health-Guide_May9.pdf**

Resources	
To deal with anxiety better : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en • https://ecolebranchee.com/ (in French) • https://carrefour-education.qc.ca/ (in French) 	For a healthy lifestyle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.dietitians.ca/News/2020/Advice-for-the-general-public-about-COVID-19?lang=en-CA • https://www.defisante.ca/(in French) • https://move50plus.ca/(in French) • https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/protecting-your-well-being-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/
To manage family time better : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.ecoleouverte.ca/en/ • http://www.alloprof.qc.ca/ (in French) • https://www.teteamodeler.com/ (in French) • https://www.viedeparents.ca/ (in French) • https://naitreetgrandir.com/fr/ (in French) • https://vifamagazine.ca/ (in French) • http://www.elaborer.org/covid_enfant.pdf 	Other sources of information : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.thepharmafist.com/ • https://www.cyberaide.ca/app/en/index • https://kidshelpphone.ca/?_ga=2.82577878.1369731909.1591822880-1224784992.1591822880 • https://www.ligneparents.com/LigneParents (in French) • https://www.teljeunes.com/Accueil (in French) • https://ampq.org/info-maladie/covid-19/(in French) • http://www.espacesansviolence.org/gaspesielesiles(in French)

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