



# 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](https://casa-gaspe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mental-health-Guide_May9.pdf)**

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

**We wish to highlight and thank Vision Gaspé-Percé Now for their contribution in the translation of this information sheet.**