

PARENTING YOUNGER CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN

In this time of COVID-19, children may have questions that are difficult to answer. Sometimes those questions can make you feel stressed. Children may respond to a stressful situation by changing their behaviour like: holding on to you, feeling nervous or worried, withdrawing or keeping quiet, feeling angry, having nightmares, bedwetting and changing moods.

Here are some tips that can help you as a parent:

Here are some tips that can help you as a parent:

1. Stay with your children. Separating from them or sending them away can make them feel stressed. Unless you feel like it is not safe for their health to stay with you, staying together is probably better.

- If the child must be away from you, try to speak to them every day to make them feel safe.

2. Try to listen and understand your children.

- Children feel calm if they can show their feelings without getting punished or shouted at.
- Every child has their own way of showing their feelings. Try to do something creative (like drawing or telling a story, or even preparing food together) to give your child a chance to show their feelings.

3. Make your child feel safe

- Children learn from the important adults in their life. So, how you respond in a crisis will affect your child.
- Remember to stay calm and handle your own feelings as best as you can.
- When you listen to your children, speak to them with a kind voice and try to remove their fears and doubts. You can give them a hug and tell them you love them. This will make them feel safe.

4. Find a safe way to let your children play

- This can help them feel relaxed and give you time to relax as well.

5. Keep your routine the same

- Try to make every day seem the same. You can do this by making a timetable for the day at home. It does not have to be as busy as a school timetable, but you can try to make sure that wake-up, eating, homework, playtime and sleep time are similar, every day. It's difficult to do this, so please don't stress if things don't always follow the plan.

6. Teach them about COVID-19

Share information about the virus in ways that your child can understand

- Show them how the virus works – it is spread when people cough and it gets into the air or by touching the things that have been touched by someone who has the virus.
- Show them how to protect themselves from infection (washing hands often with soap and water, staying away from other people and public places, coughing into the elbow, wearing a mask when outside)

You can share this information with them through fun activities like songs for washing hands, stories about how the virus works or games about keeping everything clean.

Please don't share fake news, rumors or infection rates with children because this can scare them.

If you or your child needs emotional support, please ask for help.

Contacts (keep trying they may be busy)

- South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) www.sadag.org – has many helplines 0800 21 22 23 or 0800 456 789 or 0800 20 5026 and others
- Lifeline general 0861 322 322 and their AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322
- Childline 0800 055 555

For more info and helplines visit www.messagesformothers.co.za or

www.pmhpa.org

