

11 tips for parents who are feeling overwhelmed

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To help, we've put together some tips for parents on how to cope with the impacts of mental health:

1. **Be gentle with yourself:** Learn strategies to prevent, recognize, and cope with stress, how to anticipate stress and crisis whenever possible and equip yourself with the skillset to practice self-care and to provide care for others during particularly challenging times.
2. **Take care of yourself first:** Like the flight attendant reminding us to put on our oxygen mask first before helping others, the same is true for taking care of our own distress first before we support our children with theirs.
3. **Be gentle with others:** Taking care of yourself and then being there for family and friends when they're having difficulty coping. Remember everyone handles stress a little bit differently and it's important to have patience as people work through their mental health as well.
4. **Keep your home environment calm and safe:** Keeping one's home environment calm can be hard, especially when we're overwhelmed, but we want to try to model positive coping strategies for our children. It's okay to be honest with kids if you're upset, stressed, scared – you don't have to mask all of your emotions in front of them, and it can be helpful to step away or take a break when feeling angry - but be sure to build healthy coping strategies as well. Any efforts to make your home environment calmer will benefit your children.
5. **Seek help if you need it:** Whether it's professional assistance that may be available in your community or reading through resources available to help you, be sure to reach out for help when needed. Usually, we have our family, friends and community groups to help us through challenges. With our usual supports limited or different, we must be creative in how we connect. Reach out to local organizations to see what services are available in your area, and if you're worried about yourself or your children, seek help from your health provider.

If your kids are learning virtually or being homeschooled, there can be unique challenges that come along with this. [Child and Family Pathways](#) has some great tips:

1. **Have a plan for the day:** Creating a routine is something that you can control and provide some calm when surrounded by uncertainty. If your child's classes are set on a fixed schedule, create a daily routine around those classes. Be sure to include breaks and snack time – and make sure you've scheduled your down-time!
2. **Have a space for school/work:** To help be in the right mindset, create a welcoming space in your house where you will sit down and be productive. Decorate it for school to help kids get in the right mindset – perhaps post some of their work or motivational quotes!
3. **Keep connected:** Maintaining social interactions is important, and one of the elements of school that children are missing most. Since we may not be able to schedule play dates or get together in the same way, there are still ways that kids can still see their friends virtually. For teens and adults, schedule a time to see friends online or plan a virtual study group.
4. **Have a task list:** In combination with your daily schedule, complete a "To Do" list every morning. This may relieve some stress and give you something to expect. Don't make the list too extensive each day or that may increase your stress. Try adding self-care tasks to your list. Take a nap, go for a walk, meditate, journal, etc. A task list may help you feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of your day.

5. **Take breaks:** the human brain has a hard time focusing on tasks that are too lengthy. Younger children do best at 20-min intervals. Breaks can be a simple stretch or it can be an hour outside at the park. In times of stress and anxiety, your mental health comes first. Remember to schedule breaks into your daily routine.
6. **Exercise:** physical movement is not only essential for your health but also helps in brain function and memory so be sure to plan for movement everyday. It could be going for a walk, yoga, jumping jacks, or anything you can do to get your body moving.