

# Support Tips for Families

## WITH CHILDREN DURING A CRISIS



Change and loss can impact children as much as adults. The following tips can help children, teenagers, and families connect with and support each other during times of crisis.

- All children need to feel safe and secure, no matter their age. Make this your priority. Maintain or establish a routine. Routines help children feel in control and safe.
- Several factors can influence your child's reaction, including their age, previous exposure to trauma, how family members respond, stress from change in routine, and cultural differences.
- Practice self-care. Eat healthy foods, drink water, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drug use. Set an example by managing your stress in healthy ways, such as exercising or listening to soft music.
- Answer your children's questions in an honest and accurate manner using language that your children can understand.
- Spend extra time with and give extra attention to your children. Positive touch, such as hugging, can be calming and reassuring.
- Encourage your children to share their feelings and express their emotions. Act as a sounding board for your children's feelings.
- Consider limiting family exposure to upsetting media coverage, including social media.

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### Infants:

- Keep warm, protected, and away from loud noises.
- Keep feeding, sleeping, and other schedules as normal as possible.
- Infants may cry more or seem cranky. Speak or sing to them in a calm, soft voice.

### Young Children:

- Sometimes children blame themselves. Let children know that this unusual circumstance is not their fault.
- Use technologies such as FaceTime, Zoom, and social media to connect with family members and friends.
- Provide simple responses to questions about what is happening.
- If your children are fearful or clingy, allow them to stay close to you and provide extra attention.
- Children may return to behaviors that they have outgrown, such as bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, and throwing tantrums. These behaviors are not unusual and will likely fade over time. Contact your child's pediatrician if you are worried.
- Children need to play and relax. Make time for fun and laughter together.

### Teenagers:

- Teenagers need your attention, too, but they may be less inclined to ask.
- Encourage them to participate in making regular routines. Include time to relax.
- Provide facts about what is happening and give clear information about reducing the risk of infection.
- Encourage teenagers to be helpful – in the home or virtually in the community. Help them identify ways to do so.
- Allow teenagers to express their feelings. Listen to their thoughts and feelings without judgment.
- Set clear rules and expectations.
- Link teenagers to existing networks of adolescents, youth, and other community and social support groups. Monitor the information that is being shared and talk with your teenagers about their online experiences.

### Children with Special Needs:

- Children with physical limitations may be more sensitive to a perceived threat.
- They may experience heightened anger, distress, fear, or worry about their day-to-day wellbeing.
- Provide additional explanations, extra reassurance, and more physical contact, such as extra hugs, to help kids feel safe and secure.

### Additional Resources:

Centers for Disease Control ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))  
National Alliance for Grieving Children ([childrengrieve.org](https://www.childrengrieve.org))

**If you need additional support during this time, please contact the Family Hospice bereavement department at 412-572-8829.**

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