

PARENTING DURING COVID-19

Dear Parent,

Working From Home (WFH) and Home Based Learning (HBL) will be a new experience for us. We can choose to turn this time into a positive experience for the whole family when we practice compassion, care and courage. What we hear about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) can make us anxious, stressed or sad. Our children may not fully understand what they are watching on TV or hearing from the adults and their friends. They too can feel anxious and afraid, similar to when they face a storm.

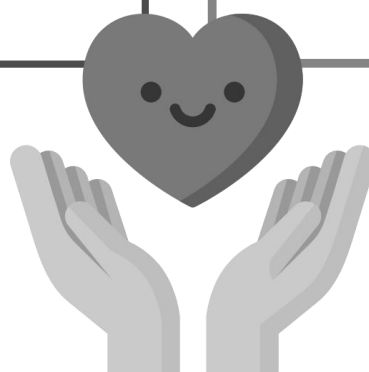
We seek the support of parents to develop resilience and courage in our children. This can be done by practicing self-management skills like thinking and acting positively.

PARENT'S MENTAL HEALTH

- Having regular, healthy meals and drinking water to keep hydrated is essential for the mind and body.
- Have a daily routine and structure for office work and school work but allow flexibility at times.
- When feeling stressed or upset, exercise a calming-down strategy by:
 1. ensuring that each member has a safe space to retreat to within the home
 2. while seated, close your eyes and take 5 slow and deep breaths
- Lower expectations on having to complete tasks within a fixed time.
- Set aside time each day for movement and fun.
e.g stretching, dancing, jumping jacks
- Call a friend, family service centre or S.O.S hotline (Samaritans of Singapore: +180 221 4444) if you feel out of control.

CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

- Set up a daily structure and routine within the family to include play and rest in-between meals and school work.
- Pay attention to changes in behaviour such as restlessness, angry outbursts or withdrawing from conversations and activities.
- Regulate intake of media. Focus on positive conversations on how to help ourselves and others during these stormy times.
- Screen time may be allowed, but not 24/7 – find educational/positive affirmation videos.
- Schedule at least 30 min daily for time outdoors on the balcony, in the garden or at the park to allow for fresh air and sun where possible.



CARE FOR PARENT

- Start the day with Quiet Time:
 1. Sit comfortably (on the floor or chair) with your back straight.
 2. Take deep breaths and notice your breathing. If you start thinking about other things, refocus on your breaths.
- Notice when you feel overwhelmed/things get too much to handle. Stop. If possible, find a quiet room and use grounding/deep breathing strategy.
- At any time of the day, stop the activities with the kids and do grounding/deep breathing activities with them.
- Have time for yourself at the end of each day to read, talk to a friend or take a long shower or bath.

CARE FOR CHILD

- Start the day with Quiet Time
- Include your child in the writing of a FAMILY TIMETABLE
- Encourage your child to work independently (e.g set about 1 hour for each subject) and teach your child to follow the timetable (like in school) so you can get your own work done.
 - Use a timer if it helps.
 - Set **25 minutes of work** and **5 minutes of break**. Continue in this manner for 2 hours, then followed by a **30 minute break**.
- Identify suitable space in the house for their work and play, mummy and daddy's space too. Teach your child to keep these spaces clean and organised.
- Look out for their needs, feelings of sadness, anxiety or restlessness.
- Make available games, drawing materials and puzzles as these are positive distractions from negative feelings.
- Empower them to take the lead for family fun activities and play.

HOW TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD:

1. Ask questions:

- What was one thing you liked about today?
- What is something you miss because you have to stay at home?

2. Validate their feelings:

- "I understand that you feel upset about it. I'm sorry that you miss your friends too."
- "It's okay to be worried or sad . This is a hard time for everyone . We will get through this together."

3. Reassure

- "When things get better , you'll see your friends again. I wonder if we can think of ways to let your friends know you miss them"
- "Most people will not get sick; lets talk about what we need to do to stay well and safe".
- If you are upset or angry tell your child, "mummy/daddy is feeling upset/angry right now and I need a 10 min break so I can give you my full attention when I come back."

4. Redirect

- When the child is restless or distracted , use a gentle but firm tone to draw attention to the activity or piece of work.