



WellEducator

connection • compassion • curiosity

Educator Wellbeing 101:

Practical Tips to Help You S.O.A.R.

Additional Resources Collected by WellEducator

FACE COVID



How to respond effectively to the Corona crisis

by Dr Russ Harris, author of The Happiness Trap

'FACE COVID' is a set of practical steps for responding effectively to the Corona crisis, using the principles of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Here's a quick summary of the key steps, and in the pages that follow we'll explore them all in more depth:

F = Focus on what's in your control

A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings

C = Come back into your body

E = Engage in what you're doing

C = Committed action

O = Opening up

V = Values

I = Identify resources

D = Disinfect & distance

Let's now explore these, one by one....



F = FOCUS ON WHAT'S IN YOUR CONTROL

The Corona crisis can affect us in many different ways: physically, emotionally, economically, socially, and psychologically. All of us are (or soon will be) dealing with the very real challenges of widespread serious illness and the inabilities of healthcare systems to cope with it, social and community disruption, economic fallout and financial problems, obstacles and interruptions to many aspects of life ... and the list goes on.

And when we are facing a crisis of any sort, fear and anxiety are inevitable; they are normal, natural responses to challenging situations infused with danger and uncertainty. It's all too easy to get lost in worrying and ruminating about all sorts of things that are out of your control: what might happen in the future; how the virus might affect you or your loved ones or your community or your country or the world – and what will happen then - and so on. And while it's completely natural for us to get lost in such worries, it's not useful or helpful. Indeed the more we focus on what's not in our control, the more hopeless or anxious we're likely to feel. So the single most useful thing anyone can do in any type of crisis – Corona-related or otherwise - is to: **focus on what's in your control.**

You can't control what happens in the future. You can't control Corona virus itself or the world economy or how your government manages this whole sordid mess. And you can't magically control your feelings, eliminating all that perfectly natural fear and anxiety. But you can control what you do - here and now. And that matters.



Because what you do - here and now - can make a huge difference to yourself, and anyone living with you, and a significant difference to the community around you. The reality is, we all have far more control over our behaviour, than we do over our thoughts and feelings. So our number one aim is to take control of our behaviour - right here and now - to respond effectively to this crisis.

This involves both dealing with our inner world – all our difficult thoughts and feelings - and our outer world – all the real problems we are facing. How do we do this? Well, when a big storm blows up, the boats in the harbour drop anchor – because if they don't, they'll get swept out to sea. And of course, dropping anchor doesn't make the storm go away (anchors can't control the weather) - but it can hold a boat steady in the harbour, until the storm passes in its own good time.

Similarly, in an ongoing crisis, we're all going to experience 'emotional storms': unhelpful thoughts spinning inside our head, and painful feelings whirling around our body. And if we're swept away by that storm inside us, there's nothing effective we can do. So the first practical step is to 'drop anchor', using the simple ACE formula:

A = Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

C = Come back into your body

E = Engage in what you're doing

Let's explore these one by one:



A = ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Silently and kindly acknowledge whatever is 'showing up' inside you: thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, sensation, urges. Take the stance of a curious scientist, observing what's going on in your inner world. As you do this, often it's helpful to put this into words, and silently say to yourself something like, 'I'm noticing anxiety', or 'Here's grief', or 'There's my mind worrying' or 'I'm having a feeling of sadness' or 'I'm having thoughts about getting sick'.

And while continuing to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings, also



C = COME BACK INTO YOUR BODY

Come back into and connect with your physical body. Find your own way of doing this. You could try some or all of the following, or find your own methods:

- Slowly pushing your feet hard into the floor.
- Slowly straightening up your back and spine; if sitting, sitting upright and forward in your chair.
- Slowly pressing your fingertips together
- Slowly stretching your arms or neck, shrugging your shoulders.
- Slowly breathing

Note: you are not trying to turn away from, escape, avoid or distract yourself from what is happening in your inner world. The aim is to remain aware of your thoughts and feelings, continue to acknowledge their presence and at the same time, connect with your body, and actively move it. Why? So you can gain as much control as possible over your physical actions, even though you can't control your feelings. (Remember, F = Focus on what's in your control)

And as you acknowledge your thoughts & feelings, and come back into your body, also



E = ENGAGE IN WHAT YOU'RE DOING

Get a sense of where you are and refocus your attention on the activity you are doing. Find your own way of doing this. You could try some or all of the following suggestions, or find your own methods:

- Look around the room and notice 5 things you can see.
- Notice 3 or 4 things you can hear.
- Notice what you can smell or taste or sense in your nose and mouth
- Notice what you are doing
- End the exercise by giving your full attention to the task or activity at hand. (And if you don't have any meaningful activity to do, see the next 3 steps.)

Ideally, run through the ACE cycle slowly 3 or 4 times, to turn it into a 2- 3 minute exercise.

If you wish, to help you get the hang of this, you can download some free audio recordings of 'dropping anchor' exercises, varying from 1 minute to 11 minutes in length. You can listen to these and use them as a guide to help you develop this skill. You can download or stream them from the left hand box on this webpage:

<https://www.actmindfully.com.au/free-stuff/free-audio/>



NOTE: please don't skip the A of ACE; it's so important to keep acknowledging the thoughts and feelings present, especially if they are difficult or uncomfortable. If you skip the A, this exercise will turn into a distraction technique – which it's not supposed to be.

Dropping anchor is a very useful skill. You can use it for handling difficult thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, urges and sensations more effectively; switching off auto-pilot and engaging in life; grounding and steadying yourself in difficult situations; disrupting rumination, obsessing and worrying; and focusing your attention on the task or activity you are doing. The better you anchor yourself in the here and now, the more control you have over your actions – which makes it a lot easier to do the next steps:
COVID



C = COMMITTED ACTION

Committed action means effective action, guided by your core values; action you take because it's truly important to you; action you take even if it brings up difficult thoughts and feelings. Once you have dropped anchor, using the ACE formula, you will have a lot of control over your actions – so this makes it easier to do the things that truly matter.

Now obviously that includes all those protective measures against Corona – frequent handwashing, social distancing, and so on. But in addition to those fundamentals of effective action, consider: What are simple ways to look after yourself, those you live with, and those you can realistically help? What kind, caring, supportive deeds you can do? Can you say some kind words to someone in distress – in person or via a phone call or text message? Can you help someone out with a task or a chore, or cook a meal, or hold someone's hand, or play a game with a young child? Can you comfort and soothe someone who is sick? Or in the most serious of cases, nurse them and access whatever medical assistance is available?

And if you're spending a lot more time at home, through self-isolation or forced quarantine, or social distancing, what are the most effective ways to spend that time? You may want to consider physical exercise to stay fit, cooking (as) healthy food (as possible, given restrictions), and doing meaningful activities by yourself or with others. And if you're familiar with acceptance and commitment therapy or other mindfulness-based approaches, how can you actively practice some of those mindfulness skills? Repeatedly throughout the day, ask yourself 'What can I do right now - no matter how small it may be - that improves life for myself or others I live with, or people in my community?' And whatever the answer is – do it, and engage in it fully.



O = OPENING UP

Opening up means making room for difficult feelings and being kind to yourself. Difficult feelings are guaranteed to keep on showing up as this crisis unfolds: fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, guilt, loneliness, frustration, confusion, and many more.

We can't stop them from arising; they're normal reactions. But we can open up and make room for them: acknowledge they are normal, allow them to be there (even though they hurt), and treat ourselves kindly.

Remember, self-kindness is essential if you want to cope well with this crisis – especially if you are in a caregiver role. If you've ever flown on a plane, you've heard this message: 'In event of an emergency, put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others.' Well, self-kindness is your own oxygen mask; if you need to look after others, you'll do it a whole lot better if you're also taking good care of yourself.

So ask yourself, 'If someone I loved was going through this experience, feeling what I am feeling – if I wanted to be kind and caring towards them, how would I treat them? How would I behave towards them? What might I say or do?' Then try treating yourself the same way.

For more on self-kindness, also known as self-compassion, read this eBook:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1__Q3UcT9Q8VuSbiRm7x7-xjaxy5xkrba/view?usp=sharing



V = VALUES

Committed action should be guided by your core values: What do you want to stand for in the face of this crisis? What sort of person do you want to be, as you go through this? How do you want to treat yourself and others?

Your values might include love, respect, humour, patience, courage, honesty, caring, openness, kindness or numerous others. Look for ways to 'sprinkle' these values into your day. Let them guide and motivate your committed action.

Of course, as this crisis unfolds, there will be all sorts of obstacles in your life; goals you can't achieve, things you can't do, problems for which there are no simple solutions. But you can still live your values in a myriad of different ways, even in the face of all those challenges. Especially come back to your values of kindness and caring. Consider:

- What are kind, caring ways you can treat yourself as you go through this?
- What are kind words you can say to yourself, kind deeds you can do for yourself?
- What are kind ways you can treat others who are suffering?
- What are kind, caring ways of contributing to the wellbeing of your community?
- What can you say and do that will enable you to look back in years to come and feel proud of your response?



I = IDENTIFY RESOURCES

Identify resources for help, assistance, support, and advice. This includes friends, family, neighbours, health professionals, emergency services. And make sure you know the emergency helpline phone numbers, including psychological help if required.

Also reach out to your social networks. And if you are able to offer support to others, let them know; you can be a resource for other people, just as they can for you.

One very important aspect of this process involves finding a reliable and trustworthy source of information for updates on the crisis and guidelines for responding to it. The World Health Organisation website is the leading source of such information:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Also check the website of your country's government health department.

Use this information to develop your own resources: action plans to protect yourself and others, and to prepare in advance for quarantine or emergency.

D = DISINFECT & DISTANCE PHYSICALLY

I'm sure you already know this, but it's worth repeating: disinfect your hands regularly and practice as much social distancing as realistically possible, for the greater good of your community. And remember, we're talking about physical distancing – not cutting off emotionally. (If you aren't quite sure about what this means, read this:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>)

This is an important aspect of committed action, so align it deeply with your values; recognise that these are truly caring actions.



IN SUMMARY

So again and again and again, as problems pile up in the world around you, and emotional storms rage in the world within you, come back to the steps of FACE COVID:

- F** = Focus on what's in your control
- A** = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings
- C** = Come back into your body
- E** = Engage in what you're doing

- C** = Committed action
- O** = Opening up
- V** = Values
- I** = Identify resources
- D** = Disinfect & distance

Well, I do hope there's something useful in here for you; and feel free to share this with others if you think may find it helpful.

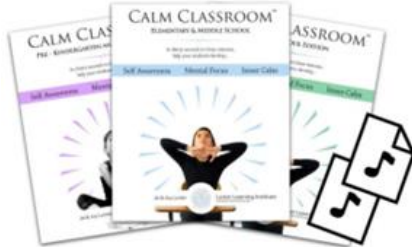
These are crazy, difficult, scary times, so please do treat yourself kindly. And remember the words of Winston Churchill: *'When you're going through hell, keep going'*.

All the best,
Russ Harris

Curriculums, Websites, and Apps :

- Mindful Schools: Offer full online training with extensive information about the brain and mindfulness. With many resources and on line teacher sharing.
<http://www.mindfulschools.org/>

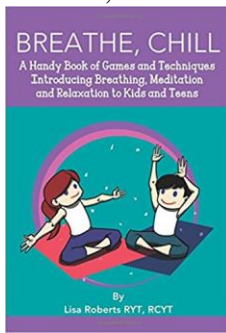
- Calm Classroom Curriculum:
<http://www.calmclassroom.com/>



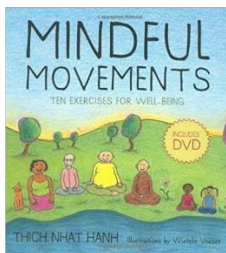
- Stop Breathe and Think: app for personal meditation and FREE interventions/curriculum
<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>
- Tools for Peace: Free Downloadable activities:
<http://www.toolsforpeace.org/resources/>
- Educator's Voice: Classroom Ideas and activities
<https://educationsvoice.wordpress.com/mindfulness-in-the-classroom-series/>
- Insight Timer: App for personal meditation and podcasts
<https://insighttimer.com/>
- Podcast: The one you Feed not all about mediation, mindfulness, social issues
- Mindup: Classroom Curriculum
<https://mindup.org/>
- Mindful Games: book and action cards
<https://www.susankaisergreenland.com/mindful-games/>
- Brainwise: A proven evidence-based social and emotional learning program for teaching critical thinking and decision making skills.
<https://www.brainwise-plc.org/>
- Kindness Curriculum: FREE: Kindness Curriculum Released for Greater Well-Being in the Classroom
<https://centerhealthyminds.org/news/kindness-curriculum-released-for-greater-well-being-in-the-classroom>

Teacher Literature:

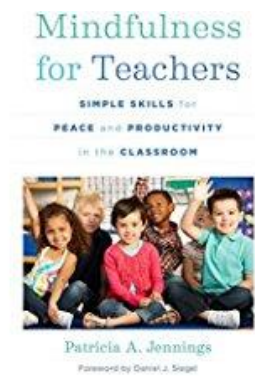
- Breathe, Chill



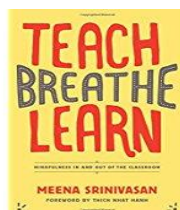
- Mindful Movements: Thich Nhat Hahn



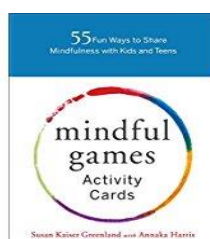
- Mindfulness for Teachers



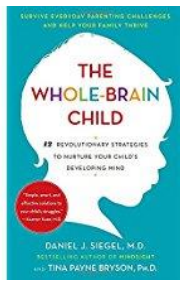
- Teach Breath Learn



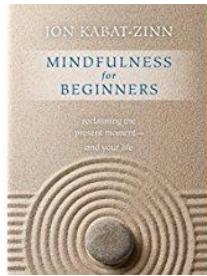
- Mindful Games Cards and Book: Susan Kaiser Greeland



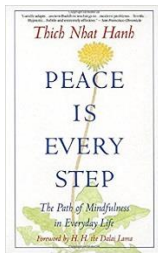
- The Whole Brain Child: Dr. Dan Siegel



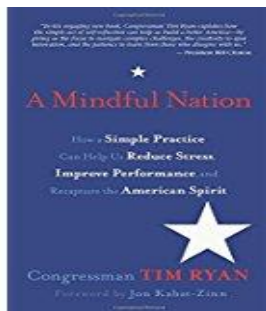
- Mindfulness for Beginners: John Kabat-Zinn



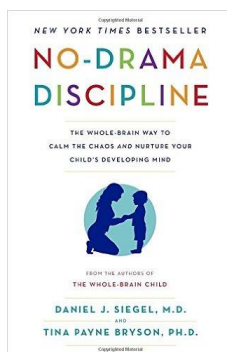
- Peace in Every Step Thich Nhat Hanh



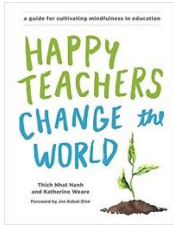
- A Mindful Nation: Tim Ryan Congressman from Ohio



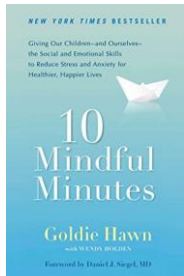
- No Drama Discipline: Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson



- Happy Teachers Change the World: Thich Nhat Hahn



- 10 Mindful Minutes: Goldie Hawn



You Tube Videos:

(I do not personally use videos but it might be a nice alternative. I am not a classroom teacher I am a facilitator)

Sesame Street Belly Breathe:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZbzDOpylA>

The Learning Station Meditation: Children's Music Group affiliated with Dr. Becky Bailey (Conscious Discipline)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVM9JKbIIqU>

Go Zen Loving Kindness Meditation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9_ZHnltMe0

Go Zen One Minute Meditation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZME0JKiweL4>

Sea Otter Cove Breathing Meditation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiaUV-OiBGE>

Monkey Breathing Meditation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CdPQ7X1MzU>

Go Noodle: Mindfulness Category is very useful

Super Scooper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ei2DHY2EMI>



Some Early Childhood Children's Literature that I have used in the past to scaffold learning:

Calm Down Time
1-2-3 I am a Calmer Me
I Went Walking
Little Monkey Calms Down
Polar Bear Polar Bear What do you Hear?
It looked like Spilt Milk
Slowly, Slowly, Slowly said the Sloth
Silence
Fill A Bucket
The Way I feel
Mindful 1-2-3
Mindful ABC
How Kind

Amazon Chime you could use:



Free app on your phone for mindfulness bell that you can set on a timer is as follows:



MindBell (& Meditation Timer)

dknapps.de Health & Fitness

★★★★★ 4,352

Everyone

Add to Wishlist

Install

Early Childhood Behavior websites:

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

Within that website there are many resources for teachers and parents so here is the resource page with visual stories to use with classes and students that all you have to do is to download and alter as you feel will fit your class best. The stories are editable.

<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/>

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/iris-resource-locator/>

The IRIS Center is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions.

progressive muscle relaxation

One of the body's reactions to fear and anxiety is muscle tension. This can result in feeling "tense", or can lead to muscle aches and pains, as well as leaving some people feeling exhausted. Think about how you respond to anxiety. Do you "tense up" when you're feeling anxious? Muscle relaxation can be particularly helpful in cases where anxiety is especially associated to muscle tension. This information sheet will guide you through a common form of relaxation designed to reduce muscle tension.

Muscle tension

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth slightly so your jaw feels tight, or maybe your shoulders become. Muscle tension can also be associated with backaches and tension headaches.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practise this technique consistently.

preparing for relaxation

When you are beginning to practice progressive muscle relaxation exercises keep in mind the following points.

- **Physical injuries.** If you have any injuries, or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.
- **Select your surroundings.** Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.
- **Make yourself comfortable.** Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.
- **Internal mechanics.** Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals, and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

general procedure

- 1 Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
- 2 When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- 3 Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
- 4 When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

Relaxation sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".
3. **Left hand and forearm.**
4. **Left upper arm.**
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
8. **Neck. !!!** Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg. !!!** Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.



How to Support Children (and Yourself) During the COVID-19 Outbreak



The coronavirus outbreak has changed many things about our daily lives. But even during this uncertain time, it's a sure thing that our children are still learning, growing, and developing.

Everyone can help support a child's healthy development (and it may even help relieve your stress!). Just a few minutes and some simple, free activities can make a difference.

1 Practice “**serve and return**,” or back-and-forth interaction with your little ones. Even before they learn to talk, infants and children reach out for attention—babbling, gesturing, or making faces. When young children “serve up” a chance to engage with them, it's important to “return” with attention. It can be as simple as a game of peek-a-boo. Or, if a toddler points at a toy, name it out loud as you hand it to the child.

Why? [Serve-and-return interactions](#) help build developing brains and [resilience](#), something we all need in these challenging times.



Helpful Resources:

Video: [5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return](#) (Center on the Developing Child)

Handout: [Serve and Return for Parents & Caregivers](#) (Center on the Developing Child)

Podcast: [The Brain Architects: Serve and Return](#) (Center on the Developing Child)

Video: [Mini Parenting Master Class with Center Director Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D.](#) (UNICEF)

Smartphone Apps: [Vroom](#) and [Kinedu](#)

2 Maintain social connections. Stay-at-home measures are helping to slow the spread of the virus, protect our health, and protect our hospitals. But, while we are staying apart from each other physically, it's even more important to connect socially, to protect our emotional well-being. Keep up relationships and social contacts—while maintaining physical distance outside your own home.

Why? Responsive relationships—like those with lots of give and return interactions (see #1 above)—between children and adults, adults and other adults, and children and other children all help buffer us against [the effects of ongoing stress](#).



Tips & Helpful Resources:

Talk with family and friends via video chat or phone. This is a great way to connect children with other adults (and give you a short break!).

If talking live isn't an option, **write emails or old-fashioned letters to friends and family.** Encourage children to ask questions of their grandparents and other adults.

Make encouraging posters and signs and put them in your windows to support your neighbors. This can also be a fun craft project to do with children!

Go outside and say hello to neighbors, friends, people passing by. Just make sure to keep at least 6 feet away from anyone who doesn't live with you.

Article: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Physical Distancing and Family Wellbeing](#) (Raising Children Network)

Article: [Keeping Classroom Connections Alive](#) (Harvard Graduate School of Education)

Article: [Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (Child Trends)

3 **Take a break** (with or without children). If you feel overwhelmed, find a way to give your stress response a rest. Take a walk around the block. Try a few minutes of meditation or deep breathing. Call a friend (*see #2 above*).

And, **give yourself a break**. Remember you're not alone—everyone is struggling with these unexpected changes to our lives, and many of us need some extra support from our communities. Be kind to yourself and understand that you can't do it all.

Why? When you can find ways to give yourself a break, you'll return to your children better able to meet their needs and support their development.



Photo by Natalia Figueredo on Unsplash

Helpful Resources:

Infographic: [What We Can Do About Toxic Stress](#) (Center on the Developing Child)

Video: [Stress and Resilience: How Toxic Stress Affects Us, and What We Can Do About It](#) (Center on the Developing Child)

Brief: [The Science of Resilience](#) (Center on the Developing Child)

Article: [COVID-19: Stress and Coping](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Article: [COVID-19: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Tool: [Free Meditations for Reducing Stress](#) (Calm.com)

For More Information & Resources:

Many communities and organizations offer supports and services such as crisis hotlines, food delivery, and relief funds. If you don't know how to find them, **call 211** in the U.S. and Canada to speak to someone who can help you get connected or visit: 211.org/services/covid19.

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University has compiled [a list of additional coronavirus-related resources](#) for parents, caregivers, and others.