

5 Tips for Caregivers of Young Children

With all of the information coming at us lately, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and uncertain. How do you determine what advice can be trusted and what advice is most important to concentrate on? This list compiles important tips from multiple trusted sources into a handy one-page tip sheet for parents and caregivers.

1. **Children thrive on routines.** Many of us lost the predictability we had built into our day with work routines, school schedules and extracurricular activities. This makes the routines that we are setting up now, at home, even more important. When establishing a routine for your child, it is important to keep in mind that not every routine has to be the same and that you do not have to schedule every minute of the day. Some suggestions for setting up a routine:
 - a. Focus on health and wellness first. Set up times for activities such as: waking up, eating meals, brushing teeth and going to bed.
 - b. Once you have some of these basic activities set, it may feel easier to schedule exercise, time to read or time to play together as a family.
2. **Children benefit from a caregiver who can regulate his/her own stress level.** Even if children are not exactly aware of what is going on in the world, they are influenced by adult emotions and stress. You can self-regulate by:
 - a. Taking a few minutes each day to catch your breath. This may include having a cup of coffee or reading a few pages in a book.
 - b. Try to limit your own exposure to media outlets.
 - c. Use mindfulness or deep breathing techniques to remain grounded.
 - d. Exercise or try to get outdoors for 15 minutes a day.
3. Experts all agree on one thing: **all the connected moments we spend with children support them emotionally and have the potential to be wonderful learning experiences** (Health Emergencies, <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/>). These positive connected moments help elevate our mood and fulfill the human need to feel connected. Research shows that when something is presented through play, it allows for meaningful learning and can be one of the most effective ways to teach information (The Difference Between Rote Learning and Meaningful Learning March 23, 2017, <https://www.oxfordlearning.com/difference-rote-learning-meaningful-learning/>).
4. **Keep communication open.** Let children ask you about something they hear in the media and let them talk with you about their worries (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html>). Some tips:
 - a. Really listen to what they are asking. What children worry about can often be very different than what adults worry about.
 - b. Use statements that help children feel like they have some control over staying healthy. For example, you may say “We know that by washing our hands and coughing and sneezing in our elbow we are helping to keep ourselves and others healthy.”
 - c. Keep information simple and age-appropriate.
5. **Remember to leave room for fun.** This may include dancing in the living room, watching a comedy, looking at funny memes or lip syncing to a silly song. Make time for doing whatever it is that will help everyone laugh!