

Suggestions for Caregivers

"Look for the Helpers" (Mr. Rogers) - Children feel better knowing that adults are actively working to change the situation. Point out people who are helping keep people safe (examples: nurses, doctors, teachers, etc.)

Be a Helper - We all feel better when we are able to do something to ease suffering we observe. Taking action can help children feel a sense of control in small ways in a larger situation beyond their control. Here are some ideas caregivers can suggest:

- Draw a picture or write a letter/e-mail to someone who is ill or isolating at home. Then take a picture and text or e-mail it to the person.
- Set up regular video-chat sessions with a person who is ill or isolating at home
- Do some extra chores to earn money and donate it to an organization helping those most affected
- Volunteer to do outdoor chores for neighbors
- Use chalk to write/draw an encouraging message on a driveway or sidewalk (be sure to get permission where needed)
- Post rotating encouraging messages for others to see in an apartment window or yard

Replace cancelled extracurriculars and other events with family time, not screen time, to build caregiver-child relationships. Positive caregiver-child relationships serve as a protective factor during times of stress. Here are some fun family activities:

- Read books aloud (even teens can enjoy this)
- Make dinner together
- Play games (search "free family games" on the internet for ideas for all ages!)
- Have a family talent show
- Have a family dance party
- Put out some craft supplies, turn on some inspiring music, and have a maker space

Maintain a consistent schedule, especially when schools close - Kids and teens feel more secure when their routine is predictable and consistent. Here are some ideas to help create a schedule:

- Exercise time to promote mental and physical health (Can't get outside? Find an online video)
- Reading/homework time to keep up with academics
- Hobby time to promote autonomy and self-expression (kids can pursue a known hobby or find a new one)
- Chore time to promote responsibility
- Play time to promote resiliency, creativity, and much more
- Screen time for older kids, especially if this connects them to friends (but not too much!)
- Meal times to promote family relationships

Source: Texas State, Institute of Play Therapy