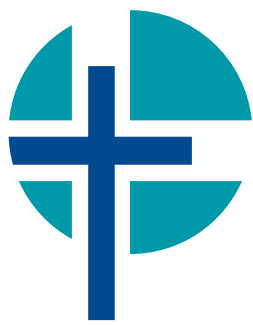


MAY
2020



SAINT PETER'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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During Anxious Times, Care for Yourself – Mind, Body & Soul

Helping Children Manage Stress During Quarantine



We are living in anxious times these days. No doubt, you have been hearing about COVID-19 from all sides – TV, Internet, social media, friends and family.

Facts are frightening, rumors abound.

Think about this: *if you are feeling scared, isolated and out of control, how do you think your children must feel?*

Everything they rely on feels upside down right now. You, as a parent, must provide a sense of reliability, normalcy and positivity, explained Susan Brill-Goldberg, MD, chief of Adolescent Medicine at The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital.

Regardless of age, says Dr. Brill-Goldberg, everyone reacts to stress differently. But children do not have the life experience to understand that this, too, shall pass.

Some anxiety is normal, healthy. It allows us to see the world around us carefully and helps us look before we leap, she said. However, when stress becomes overwhelming, it can get in the way of basic functioning.

"If your kids are not sleeping, their appetite is affected or they are melting down and/or having panic attacks, it's time to seek outside assistance," she suggested.

For a referral to a mental health counselor for your child, call Dr. Brill-Goldberg's office at 732-565-5487.

What You Can Do Right Now

Shut it off! The first thing Dr. Brill-Goldberg suggests – and this advice is for the entire family – is to limit access to news about the pandemic. Reduce access to media to reduce information overload.

Stick to a schedule. Eat meals at mealtime. Monitor access to social media and don't use it as a babysitter for younger kids. Stick to bath and bedtime routines. Routines help our minds to stay organized and focused.

Learn new things! Now is a great time to teach children some life skills such as sewing, cooking, gardening, etc. There are many cultural activities available online, including Broadway plays and children's concerts you can check out together.

Be honest. Children may ask plenty of questions. "Will I get sick?" "Will you get sick?" "Will people we know die?"

It's important to be straightforward and honest, says Dr. Brill-Goldberg, noting "say something like 'our family has doctors we trust and that if someone gets sick, we will have access to the help we need.'"



Now's the time to shift your perspective. View quarantine at home as an opportunity to spend quality time with your family.

An old Cherokee speaks of two wolves. "A fight is going on inside me," he says. One wolf is evil; he is angry, greedy, arrogant, guilty and full of self-pity, envy and resentment. The second wolf is good; he is full of joy, peace, love, hope, kindness, compassion and faith. A boy listens to the elder's tale thoughtfully and then asks: "Which wolf will win the battle?" The elder Cherokee replies, "The one you feed."

Who among us isn't feeding the evil wolf these days? Many of us are anxious, depressed and scared about the COVID-19 pandemic. Sheltering in place, working from home, and having to teach children at home are forcing stress levels through the roof. Add to that possible financial difficulties and fear of illness. It's no wonder everyone feels so out of control!

While much is out of our hands these days, you can control your own body and guide your family to take care of themselves, as well, says Elise Spector, LCSW, a social worker in Saint Peter's Emergency Department.

"It's critically important to manage stress and fear right now. If you don't, it can get the better of you," she said, noting that feelings of anxiety are completely normal these days. "It is understandable if you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed and very frightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are experiencing changes in mood, eating or sleep patterns or having trouble concentrating, you are not alone. We are all in this together."

Spector suggested some ways to manage stress:

Take Care of Yourself! Make sure you focus on eating well and getting enough exercise. Don't sit on the couch all day binge-watching TV. Get up and do something active – and encourage your family members to join you. Take a walk, do some gardening or find an app that will lead a class on yoga or some other physical activity.

Also, make sure you get enough sleep – but not too much! Just because you have some extra time on your hands doesn't mean you should sleep the day away, Spector said. "Stick to your regular bedtime routines and make sure your kids do the same."

Take Breaks! Many people are working from home. Others are helping their children with school work. Still, others are taking classes, connecting with people on social media and video conferencing apps such as Zoom and Skype. Take breaks from technology. Do something that makes you happy – cook, clean, read, sew, draw, etc. Switching your mindset and refocusing your attention on varied activities can bring a bit of calm to your life during this storm.

Don't Look for a Crutch. "If you are having significant issues dealing with stress, please reach out to a therapist for support," Spector said. "Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs as a coping mechanism."

She said people need to accept that the unknown can be scary. "We do not know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know when this will all be over. We don't know what our new normal will look like," she said. "Therefore, it's important to take it day by day or even hour by hour if need be. If you need help, reach out. We are going to get through this by getting through it *together*."

Contact your insurance or primary care physician for referrals to a mental health counselor. Many therapists are offering counseling by phone or teleconferences.

Turn it Off! The media is offering non-stop COVID-19 coverage. Everyone with social media is posting about it all day long. Monitor how much time you spend watching and reading about it. "If you limit your access to the news, you can better manage your reaction to it. This is especially important if you have children because they take their cues from adults," the social worker pointed out. "Setting technology time limits for yourself and others in your home may quiet the noise and reduce stress."

Community Calendar

For more information or to register for a program, call the contact number listed or visit saintpetershcs.com/Events
Most programs are **FREE** unless noted; please call for information.



We are
all
in this
together

Thank you to our community for supporting the Healthcare Heroes at Saint Peter's.

Support Groups

Cancer Support

Bone Marrow Transplant

For patients who have had an allogeneic transplant
Call for information: 732.235.8522

Breast Cancer

Call for information: 732.235.7011

Gynecologic Cancer

In partnership with the Cancer Support Community
Central New Jersey
Call for information: 732.235.6792

Living with Cancer

Call for information: 732.235.7557

Support Groups

Bariatric

Call for information: 732.339.7450

Bereavement

Call Pastoral Care for information at 732.745.8565

SHARE (for those who have suffered miscarriage)

Call for information: 732.745.8522

Craniofacial Teen Girls

Call for information: 732.745.8600, x8113

MyGOAL Autism Family

Call for information: 877.886.9462

Spouse/Partner Caregiver

Call for information: 732.745.8600, x8662

Diabetes Education

For more information about the following classes,
please call the phone numbers listed below.

Diabetes Self-Management Education

Call for information: 732.339.7630

Gestational Diabetes Self-Management Education

Call for information: 732.339.7630

Type I Diabetes Support Group for Children and Their Families

Call for information: 732.745.8600, x8610

Parent Education

Parenting classes are currently being held online. Register at saintpetershcs.com/Services/Parent-Education.
Once registered for a class, access information will be provided to you.

For information about the following classes, please call Parent Education at 732.745.8579

Baby Care

Birth Center Class

(for moms under midwifery care)

Breastfeeding Class

Breastfeeding Support Group

Grandparents Class

Hypnobirthing

Marvelous Multiples

New Daddy Class

New Mom Support Group

Prenatal Yoga & Exercise Class

Prepared Childbirth/Lamaze Classes

Sibling Class

Need a doctor? To find a Saint Peter's physician, call 1.855.SP.MY.DOC (1.855.776.9362).

Also available, online scheduling with select Saint Peter's Healthcare System physicians via Zocdoc at BookMySPDoc.com

This calendar is for information only. Do not rely on it to make healthcare decisions on your own; instead, talk with your healthcare provider for advice and treatment. Do not ignore medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you read here. We do not suggest or endorse that you have any tests, use products, or use other information in this document without advice from your healthcare provider.



254 Easton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

732.745.8600 | 800.269.7508 | saintpetershcs.com

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