

## Caregivers, Children and COVID-19

*The daily stress caused by the virus, social distancing and a deep financial crisis have had a big impact on all people in our community. It is normal to experience feelings of isolation, anxiety and uncertainty in this abnormal situation. Prioritizing your mental health and staying connected is more important than ever.*



**Talking with your children about COVID-19:** Read the following guide on specific tips for caregivers.

### Adjusting during a time of unknown...

With all the changes going on in the world, everyone is experiencing a variety of feelings. One that may be more difficult to identify is grief. Parents and families are experiencing lost vacation plans, missed family outings, and cancelled celebrations amid a slew of numerous and unidentifiable plans and hopes. Without realizing it, many are trying to make sense of and process through this loss. Dan Siegel discusses a strategy called “Name it, to tame it” which allows the start of processing or working through our grief. Below is an example:

- ❖ **Denial:** The virus is not something that will affect me and is not serious.
- ❖ **Anger:** I have to cancel my plans and stay away from friends.
- ❖ **Bargaining:** If I am at home and social-distancing will I be safe?
- ❖ **Sadness:** This is never going to end.
- ❖ **Acceptance:** The virus is real. I will take the measures to keep myself and my loved ones safe and I can move forward from this (Rosebaugh, 2020).

## Social and Emotional Resources for caregivers and children

### Managing Stress and Anxiety

- ❖ Helping children cope with changes – visit [NASP](#)
- ❖ When and how to take care of yourself, others, and seek professional help if needed. Provides support for parents who want to talk to their children about what is happening. Visit [the CDC](#)
- ❖ How to ease children’s anxiety about COVID-19 by NAMI- visit [here](#)
- ❖ View the Tell Me Where to Turn Brochure for additional resources

**Resources for younger children:** A short video of the book Yucky Bug, by Julia Cook. This book discusses the hardships students may face during the COVID-19 pandemic. Includes a Parent Discussion Guide - visit [YouTube](#)

**Resources for children age 6-11:** Printable comic for kids explaining the new Coronavirus. Visit [NPR.org](#)

**Resources for Teens and Young Adults:** Tips for parenting teenagers & young adults during the COVID-19 outbreak. Visit [Child Mind Institute](#)

*This resource was created by a multi-agency mental health workgroup within Linn County*

## Indicators of Well-being:

In looking to overcome the strong feelings and struggles being faced, it is important that people look to cultivate their resilience. Resiliency is the ability to recover or overcome adversity. RISE: Wellness & Resilience Framework™, developed by Tonya Hotchkin identifies four indicators of well-being that are often observed and focused on to aid in building and increasing one's resilience.

### Safety:

- ❖ Ensure a sense of safety by staying in your home
- ❖ Go out when you feel it's necessary or access needed items through delivery or curbside
- ❖ Wear "gear" or carry items such as hand sanitizer
- ❖ Establish daily routines and rituals
- ❖ Find or create your own retreat space
- ❖ Limit conversations around COVID-19

### Connection/Belonging:

- ❖ Connect with others via online platforms such as Zoom, Facetime, Skype.
- ❖ Write letters or cards to others.
- ❖ Make a phone call to check in on others or just to say 'hi'.
- ❖ Find groups or classes online that you can participate in.
- ❖ Smile and say thank you or be polite to others you may interact with or pass throughout your day.
- ❖ Create family time-play games, read books together.
- ❖ Play with children when possible.

### Meaning/Purpose

- ❖ Identify ways you can help others.
- ❖ Identify goals or things you'd like to accomplish during this time.
- ❖ Help others in ways that are safe/you feel comfortable with (donate and/or deliver items, pick up items for others when you go shopping).
- ❖ Take care of yourself, go outside, move around, shower, get dressed.
- ❖ Create time for journaling, reading, connecting with nature, mindfulness and finding meaning during this time.

### Efficacy

- ❖ Identify things that are within your control.
- ❖ Find ways to share your skills with others.
- ❖ Focus on small 'chunks' of this time and what things you can do within a day or a week.
- ❖ Start a project and finish it.
- ❖ Learn a new skill

## Activities during COVID [How to remain engaged and stay active]

### Quarantine activities

- ❖ Move more at Home - 10 ways to keep your kids moving. Visit [Healthiest State Initiative](#)
- ❖ 1 minute fitness challenges – watch [this video](#) to learn more
- ❖ Virtual Physical Education Activities and Resources for all movers – visit [here](#)
- ❖ Workout at home for free – visit [here](#)
  
- ❖ Activities to do together:
  - ❖ Scavenger hunt in house or yard
  - ❖ Play chalk outside
  - ❖ Play I spy with My Little Eyes
  - ❖ Create a puppet show
  - ❖ Make Art Collages
  - ❖ Family dance party
  - ❖ Cook/bake together
  - ❖ Read books together/create a story
  - ❖ Finger Paint
  - ❖ Have a picnic in the backyard
  
- ❖ Activities to encourage children to do independently:
  - ❖ Play dress up
  - ❖ Make up a dance to share
  - ❖ Build a fort
  - ❖ Jump Rope
  - ❖ Play Hide N Seek in the house
  - ❖ Draw fun pictures
  - ❖ Blow bubbles
  - ❖ Decorate a T-shirt/Tie-Dye
  - ❖ Create your own game
  - ❖ Simon Says in the backyard

### Engagement activities

- ❖ **Young Child (ages 2-8) & Parent Engagement Activity:** Come up with fun ways to cross the room! Stand at one end of a room with your child and go back and forth in certain ways. For example: hopping, tiptoeing, crawling, or walking backwards. Cross the room together with your child if they need some help. Try disco dance, crab walk, elephant walk, or scooting!
  
- ❖ **Older Child (ages 9-18) & Parent Engagement Activity:** Make a special handshake! Take turns adding new gestures, for example, high five, clasp hands, wiggle fingers, and so on. When you're all done, share it with another member of your family. Try to get in the habit of this being your special greeting with your child, something to maintain even after quarantine is over!

- ❖ **Read the book** My Hero is You, how kids can fight COVID-19 -



## Friendships during Social Distancing

- ❖ Make time to connect with loved ones.
- ❖ Using Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, and other types of video calls on a regular basis to speak with your relatives and friends will be valuable to the outside world. If video calls aren't an option, phone them.
- ❖ Keep up with social routines – go for a walk and FaceTime a friend to join you.
- ❖ Challenge friends virtually to play a game [i.e. push up challenge or trivia]
- ❖ Normal routines are different, but we can still remain connected. Check out [Please Pass the Love](#) for some opportunities to connect.

## Additional Resources:

- ❖ **Food:**
  - ❖ List of school locations for food pick-up visit [GWAEA](#)
  - ❖ **HACAP:** Food assistance, WIC, Child Health, Maternal Health, Breastfeeding Support, Child Care Nurse Consultant, Medicaid/Hawk-I, 1st Five, Head Start/Early Head Start, Energy Assistance/LIHEAP, I-Smile Oral Health, Affordable Housing, Homelessness  
**Contact:** HACAP Office Front Desk: 319-393-7811 Ext. 1001 or [www.hacap.org](http://www.hacap.org)
- ❖ **Shelter/Housing:**
  - ❖ **HACAP:** Affordable Housing, Homelessness **Contact:** HACAP Office Front Desk: 319-393-7811 Ext. 1001 or [www.hacap.org](http://www.hacap.org)
- ❖ **Utility Assistance:** Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)  
Financial assistance for families unable to pay their utility bills. **Contact:** [this website address](#)

The Gazette has created a listing of available resources for [residents](#). There are several local mental health agencies currently providing services by phone or telehealth. Most local mental health agencies have immediate openings.

## Virtual support groups, crisis hot lines or warm lines are available:

- ❖ Tanager Place Support Groups
  - Caregiver Support Group contact [jsarnecky@tanagerplace.org](mailto:jsarnecky@tanagerplace.org).
  - High-School Support group contact [kthom@tanagerplace.org](mailto:kthom@tanagerplace.org).
- ❖ Foundation 2 Crisis Line at 319-362-2174
- ❖ Peer support for Caregivers - Abbe Health Warm Line at 844-775-WARM (9276)
- ❖ Your Life Iowa at 855-581-8111 (talk) or 855-895-8398 (text)  
[www.yourlifeiowa.org](http://www.yourlifeiowa.org) for information or chat

In addition, many local school districts and Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) have resources available online.