



ProjectTEACH



SUPPORTING YOUR FAMILY'S EMOTIONAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

What can families do at home to support the long-term, positive emotional health and mental wellness of children and teens during the pandemic? In this time of uncertainty, there are some things we know about supporting children's mental health. Below are suggestions that may be helpful to you and your family.

As hard as it feels, take care of yourself.

This is probably the hardest but most important thing to do, but you cannot take care of your children or loved ones if you don't take care of yourself. Think about your own self-care – sleep, dedicated alone time – and make a plan to prioritize it. Your mindset is also important. Not holding yourself to pre-COVID standards, and giving yourself [permission to make some mistakes](#) is an important part of your self-care. Families and caregivers do the best they can with what they know, and so much of what we are experiencing is unknown and unfamiliar. "This is a novel virus, and these are novel times," says Project TEACH consultant Dr. Gene Beresin. If you have a partner or other adult member of the household, talk about ways you can support each other in prioritizing what you each need. Reach out to other families and see what they are doing to navigate a day during this time. And reach out to [NY Project Hope](#), an emotional support helpline.

Ask your child how they are doing. What are they feeling?

As a parent, you may have your own concerns about your child's mental health. But don't forget to ask them what they are struggling with. Their answer may be different than what you expect. Do they miss seeing their friends? Are they afraid of falling behind in class? Do they feel like they have no privacy? Do they [feel anxious about being on video](#) during remote learning? The more information you can get about what your child is thinking, feeling, and hoping for, the better. Letting your child talk through what they are going through can also help them to feel less [anxiety](#). When you listen to your child and hear from their point of view, you can better support them.

Use positive messages in conversations at home.

What you say in conversations can have a big impact on your child's emotional health, especially since many families are home together now, and sometimes in very close quarters. Your child may overhear [how you speak and interact with others](#). Be mindful of what you say in [conversations your child might overhear](#), even if you don't think they are close by. Everything from talking about news issues in a positive way to sharing personal stories about how you manage relationships can help to support your child's well-being, says [Project TEACH consultant Dr. Gene Beresin](#).

Approach school with a collaborative attitude.

This year is hard no matter what kind [schooling your child is doing during COVID](#) – remote, in-person, hybrid, or going back and forth between these. Continue to do your best to stay up to date on what’s going on in your school district. Also, continue to approach any school challenges with the attitude that “we’re all in this together,” says [Project TEACH consultant Dr. Ellen Braaten](#). And when it comes to your child, especially if they are a teen, try to keep in mind the impact of everything they are missing socially as well as in-person learning.

Monitor your child for gaps in development.

“The great thing about the brain is plasticity. We have the ability to recapture experiences that we had some gaps in. It’s a matter of parents and teachers and tutors and coaches and older siblings and needing to know what needs monitoring,” says Project TEACH Consultant Dr. Gene Beresin. While children can be more resilient than we realize, there are also real concerns about loss in social and academic progress for those in [remote learning](#). This is especially true for children who were having [challenges with school prior to the pandemic](#). You know your child best. Observe them for gaps in learning, socialization, and relationships. Involve other adults in doing the same.

Act on any mental health concerns.

As a parent, you know your child best. If you have concerns about their mental, emotional, or behavioral health, remember that you are not alone.

- **Visit the Project TEACH Parent and Family Page.** If you have concerns about your child’s general mental and emotional health, or specific concerns about [anxiety](#), [depression](#), [ADHD](#), or [bipolar disorder](#), the [Project TEACH Parent and Family Page](#) has videos and flyers to help you identify and navigate these concerns.
- **Visit NY Project Hope.** This is an [emotional support helpline](#) for ways to cope with COVID-19 and tips on how to take care of yourself.
- **Know how to recognize signs of a mental health concern.** A key role for parents and family members in helping to promote mental wellness in children is to be aware of any signs for mental health concerns. These Project TEACH flyers share how to watch for any notable changes in your [preschooler](#), [grade schooler](#), [teenager](#), or [young adult](#).
- **Know the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-8255 (24/7/365). You can also reach out to the Crisis Text Line: Text “Got5” to 741741 (24/7/365).
- **Know that your pediatrician is a first line of support.** If you notice changes in your child or teen’s typical behavior that concern you, [reach out to your pediatrician](#) or primary care doctor. They are a good place to start in talking through your concerns and thinking about what next steps are needed.
- **Know that there are support groups out there.** Just as your child is not alone in this, neither are you. Look for [a support group in your area](#) to connect with other parents/caregivers who are in similar situations with their children. There are also support groups for both children and adults [struggling with specific disorders](#).

To learn more about mental health concerns by child age group, visit the Project TEACH Parent and Family Page: <http://bitly.com/PTEACH-Family>

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