

MENTAL HEALTH MOMENT FINDING HOPE THROUGH CHANGE

Families and individuals everywhere are struggling with the sudden changes related to COVID-19 related to schools, work and life. Here are some tips for managing change!

Helping Children Manage Change

Structure the day Understand the secret to helping kids manage stress is *structure*. Coming up with a simple schedule of what is expected and posting it helps provide children concrete expectations. Adding checkmarks or stickers helps reward and instill a sense of accomplishment. The key is start simple and challenge them to come up with ideas.

Use “Learning Bursts” Clinicians call this “chunking” which means engaging children in a timeframe that is realistic compared to their attention span. Try 45-minute tasks and provide a break or reward. Setting clear expectations in advance & for how long each “chunk” will last. Then follow up to see if they did the work as expected. Evaluate but don’t judge the results. What was done? What wasn’t?

Alternate Activities Think about what motivates your children and alternate activities that may be less appealing. For instance, start with E-Learning for 45 minutes and then follow up with time for video games or a favorite snack. Peppering kids with simple rewards using *alternating activities* is helpful for children with shorter attention spans.

Helping Yourself Manage Change

Focus on the Positive Being realistic about changes due to the pandemic means acknowledging the helpful, not just the harmful. What opportunities do you have to spend time with family, friends, hobbies or to develop new interests?

Reach Out Talk to those you trust in your life if you are struggling with change. Ask them for ideas or tips. Be curious about how they are managing change and what works or doesn’t work. Look for online resources, support groups or internet groups that share a common cause, interest or hobby.

Get in the Moment Focusing too much on the future can lead to excessive speculation, increased uncertainty and a common “thinking error” known as *fortune-telling*. This leads to higher levels of anxiety. We often need to tolerate *this moment*. Take a moment to look around and notice your immediate environment. Breathe deeply and let your breath out slowly.

Professional Help Overwhelmed? Help is available. Set a private & confidential appointment today.

