

# Emotionally Surviving COVID-19:

## An informational and self help guide provided by your Lighthouse Telehealth EAP team.

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Fall is upon us with its crisp cool night air, a backdrop of beautiful changing colors, and the tastes of fresh picked apples, milled cider, and pumpkin pie. There is so much to look forward to despite the challenges we continue to face due to COVID-19. With so much out of our control, it is important to remember that we do get to choose how much time and attention we spend focused on the negative aspects of these challenges versus how much energy we spend on the positives. For instance, someone might reflect that although it is a bummer they likely won't have Big 10 college football to watch this year, they will have more time on the weekends to focus on other tasks they have neglected like painting that room, cleaning out the garage, or rebuilding that car engine. For some it will be more time to focus on relationships, faith, health and wellness, or exploring new hobbies. Your attitude shapes the attitudes of those around you and can have a direct impact on the mood of your partner, children, and other loved ones.



For children, the uncertainties about the upcoming school year are abundant. It is important they have tools that allow them to adapt to an ever-changing world. Helping your children build resiliency will help them feel more empowered to face the future as well as to bounce back from setbacks and problem solve solutions. One way to do this is to keep an eye on your own ratio of positive to negative talk and make needed adjustments so you can be a good resiliency role model. Let your children vent about their disappointments but lead them in a discussion about what they have to look forward to and what the trade-offs might be regarding the adjustments they are having to make. Try to keep discussions about the stressors of COVID-19 to a minimum, focusing more on the current positives in your life. Limit negative talk about those that had to make tough decisions but whose opinions you might not necessarily agree with like a school administrator or a work manager. For more ideas be sure and check out the homework assignment included in this newsletter.



## Making the Most of Remote Learning

For many children school this year will include at least partial virtual learning. Online learning requires a collaboration between the school, student, and the family. It includes extra effort and engagement from all parties and can be a major source of added stress for parents this year. While some older children may be able to navigate this process with minimal assistance, younger children and those with additional learning needs or healthcare needs, may need significant help from parents or other adults. In “Resuming School During COVID-19: A Resource Guide for Parents” Workplace Options lists the following tips:

- **Make a schedule.** Schedules give children a predictable structure for the flow of the day and provide a sense of normalcy. Some children have difficulty with transitions and surprises, so a written schedule helps them know what to expect. Parents can set aside time for schoolwork, reading, physical activities, meals, chores, family time, and just having fun.
- **Set up a designated workspace for your child.** Children need quiet, well-lit spaces for homework under normal conditions. Those designated workspaces are doubly important for remote learning. Find a space in your home where your child can focus on remote learning with as little distraction as possible. Over time, going to that space will become a mental trigger to focus on school.
- **Stock up on supplies.** Plan ahead to have needed supplies in your home, and help your child prepare for remote sessions by having those supplies readily at hand in the designated workspace.
- **Enlist older siblings to help.** Older children may welcome the opportunity to help younger siblings with schoolwork. This kind of child-to-child learning support can enhance the learning experience for both children. It's also a great way to free up some time for parents to get things done.
- **Leverage online resources.** Parents aren't expected to be experts in all subjects! Use online resources to supplement your child's remote learning and help explain topics your child is learning about.
- **Ask for help.** If you or your child have questions about a school assignment, reach out to teachers or other families for help.
- **Carve out time.** If you're working from home, set aside time when your children can come to you with questions and ask for help—time when you can give them your full attention, without distractions. You may want to create a way for your child to ask questions outside of this special time, perhaps with Post-it notes, a dry-erase board, texts by phone, or other signals.
- **Have some fun.** Try to build as much fun and laughter as possible into your life at home. Children learn best when they're engaged and relaxed. So, try to bring some joy into their experience.
- **Be kind to yourself.** These are unprecedented times, and life can get messy and hard. Juggling school, work, daily chores, and to-do lists while caring for your children and helping with their education is not a small feat! Accept that not everything will be perfect. Step back periodically to remember what really matters. Think about what you are grateful for. Take breaks to relax, exercise, meditate, or snuggle with your kids.

Another tip is to create a lunch menu for the week and purchase all of your items on the weekend. Choose meals that have a nutritious component and the children can help prepare themselves. It might even be fun for your children to select age-appropriate recipes to make, which has added learning benefits of math, science, and reading and can boost creativity and self-confidence.

## Here are some simple recipes:

### Rainbow Veggie Pinwheels



Cover a large whole grain tortilla with spread of your choice (i.e. mayo, ranch dressing, hummus) and add favorite veggies (i.e. spinach, onion, peppers, shredded carrots, tomatoes, pickles) in a thin layer. Of course you can add cheese and/or lunch meat if you'd like. Roll up tightly and then cut into 1-inch pinwheels for a fun finger food.

### Apple Slice Dessert



Cut up an apple horizontally and allow your children to get creative, making each slice into a tasty treat. Topping suggestions include peanut butter, jelly, caramel, chocolate syrup, crushed peanuts, coconut, mini chocolate chips, marshmallow whip, rainbow sprinkles, and graham cracker crumbs. Allow your children to

get creative with their culinary masterpiece! Fall fresh orchard apples are the best!

**Check out the CDC website for detailed back-to-school checklists.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/parent-checklist.html>



*"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity"*

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

“ We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are

- ANAIS NIN ”

*"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career.*

*I've lost almost 300 games.*

*26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed.*

*I've failed over and over and over again in my life.*

*And that is why I succeed!"*

- MICHAEL JORDAN

## Homework:

### Debate Your Critic

Negative critical talk in the family can lead to a host of other problems in children like low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, or perfectionism. You might want to help one another contain the critic by making this a fun family game. When someone is being overly critical you can come up with a name, word, or phrase to identify that this is occurring. The person who is being overly critical must then challenge their critique and come up with a positive true statement. This can help someone with the “all or nothing” thinking patterns that lead us to miss out on a range of ideas and possibilities when we only see the negatives in a situation.

#### Example:

A work-from-home father annoyingly states to wife at the dinner table, “I wish the school district understood that I have a job too and it’s not my job to be a teacher”.

Teenage son overhears conversation, recognizes the critic, and states the agreed upon phrase, “Mud Puddle.”

Father laughs and then states to family, “Well you kids won’t be young forever and I guess it is kind of cool having more time to hang out with you during the day. I like that we get to eat lunch together and that I get to relearn my geometric shapes. Plus, I don’t have to wait in that long line to pick you up every day, so I do get done with my work sooner.”

### During stressful times it can be helpful to express your emotions.

For some journaling is a good way to deal with these overwhelming thoughts and emotions, learn more about what is triggering difficult emotions, and, in the process, learn more about yourself. Many however struggle with knowing how to get started. There is no right or wrong way to maintain a journal. For some it is helpful to keep more of a diary, outlining positive and negative experiences and the feelings that accompanied these events. For others, journaling about short-term and long-term goals gives the person structure and focus. However, there are many ways to journal for personal growth.

#### Here are a few entry starters you may want to try:

1. My dream for my future is...
2. Things that make me happy are...
3. My biggest fear right now is...
4. I am sad when...
5. Most people don’t know this about me...
6. An insecurity that I would like to work on is...
7. I need to forgive myself for...
8. I wish people understood this about me...
9. Three things I love most about myself are...
10. My greatest accomplishment is...
11. If I wasn’t afraid to fail I would...
12. I need to forgive...

*According to an article in Positive Psychology, “83 Benefits of Journaling for Depression, Anxiety, and Stress” (<https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-journaling/>), benefits include boosting your mood, enhancing your sense of well-being, improving memory, decreasing various health conditions, and strengthening your immune system.*

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