

Raising Healthy Teens

Promoting the Health & Safety
of Kent & South County Teens

Special Edition
**Creative Connecting
During Covid**

Spring 2020

Message from the Coalitions

It's hard to turn on the TV or radio these days without being bombarded by news about the coronavirus outbreak. The steady stream of information can be overwhelming, creating a very stressful environment, especially for parents and their families.

Our hope is that this newsletter can help parents and kids navigate this trying situation with information, tips and resources, including how to talk with your kids about what they're hearing, tips to manage stress and ways to stay healthy, not only physically but mentally as well, during these days of social distancing, school closures and cancelled recreational activities.

What Parents Should Know About Kids & Coronavirus

The coronavirus, the disease that originated in Wuhan, China, has the entire world on edge, but perhaps nobody is as concerned as parents. The good news is most Americans are unlikely to get the coronavirus without known exposure and even if they do contract it, they'll likely recover without complications.

Most experts say children are less likely to contract the coronavirus without known exposure to the disease. And even if your child were to contract the coronavirus, it probably won't be severe or life-threatening.

Why is the Coronavirus So Mild for Children?

Since the coronavirus is a novel disease, experts still don't know much about it — including why children have lower transmission rates and milder symptoms. One theory is that kids have better immune responses than adults, which helps them fight off the coronavirus. Another theory from experts is that children might simply have less exposure to the coronavirus, since adults take extra precautions to prevent the spread of sickness.

Best Way to Help Prevent Spread of Virus in Children

Like the cold and flu, the coronavirus is a respiratory illness that spreads via contaminated droplets that enter the body through the eyes, nose, and mouth. The best prevention method is washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will also work in a pinch. Parents should also disinfect common surfaces like doorknobs and countertops and any items that children use often such as phones or their computer mouse or gaming consoles.

Most importantly, let your child know that you're available for questions, and answer their inquiries honestly without scaring them unnecessarily. For younger teens, this [comic from NPR](#) is a nice conversation starter.

**For up-to-date information on disease statistics, spread, and travel advisories in the U.S. from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CLICK HERE](#).
From Rhode Island Department of Health, [CLICK HERE](#).**

Parents Should Take Social Distancing Seriously

For the first time ever, Americans are asked to practice “social distancing,” which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines as “remaining out of places where people meet or gather,” and “avoiding public transportation.” That includes going to the gym or parties, or using buses, subways, taxis and rideshares like Uber or Lyft.

Social Distancing also means maintaining a distance of six feet (or two meters) from others. Yes, that means you’re supposed to be keeping kids six feet apart whenever possible, not piling them in a car to go the local movie just because they’re out of school. Social Distancing is key both to your own and your children’s health and meant to help limit the spread of the virus throughout the community.

Most Children are Not in Danger

Remind your children they are not necessarily in serious danger from the virus — unless, of course, their immune system is already compromised from a serious medical condition. Most healthy children “are at reduced risk” of serious illness or death from coronavirus, said Dr. Tom Frieden, former CDC director. “One bit of good news is that, unlike the flu, children up to at least age 18 appear to not become very ill with Covid-19. They can be infected, but fatal infection appears to be extremely rare.”

Children are ‘Spreaders’

If the vast majority of children are not in danger, why such caution? Because we don’t yet know how infectious children under age 20 may be, said Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus response coordinator, in a recent press briefing. So at this time, it’s best for the most vulnerable in our society if we act as though children may be key transmitters of coronavirus, and do our best to help everyone stay safe.

Plan Carefully

There’s no way you can keep your child away from everyone, of course, so experts suggest parents plan carefully. If possible, consider individual outdoor activities like biking or hiking where sports equipment isn’t shared and it’s easier to keep a good distance from each other. Outdoor activities are also an excellent option for the whole family — to reduce stress, get the sunlight and exercise we need, and improve our sleep — all things that fight off illness of any sort.

While going to the movies may not be not such a good idea right now, there are some outings we still need to do. We all have to eat and picking an unpopular time to visit the grocery store may be best. And though many restaurants are closed right now, consider take-out or delivery. Support local businesses as much as possible since they are a community resource.

In the end, experts say, it all comes down to what you — as a parent — are comfortable with when it comes to risk. And keep in mind that this is the current advice. It could change tomorrow as we learn more about this viral invader.

But as you ponder how to navigate these next few weeks at home with your kids, keep in mind that the impact of your decisions affect more than your family.



How Families Can Help Manage Anxiety & Stress During Covid-19

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) can be stressful for everyone, including parents and their kids. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in both adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, your children, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

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Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, or first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

when you feel ANXIOUS

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Stress during infectious disease outbreaks can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, call 911. Or call the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline at 1.800.985.5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 800.846.8517)

Parents, some things you can do to support yourself:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.

- Make time to unwind and chill. Try other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.
- Sharing the facts about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risks can make an outbreak less stressful for all.
- When you share accurate information about COVID-19 you can help make people feel less stressed.
- Learn more about taking care of your emotional health from the CDC or check out SAMHSA's *Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health During an Infectious Disease Outbreak*.

For Parents Children and teens react on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many ways you can support your child:

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the outbreak. Answer questions and share facts in a way that your child or teen can understand. Also, check out *Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks* from SAMHSA.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning, just relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Using Media & Tech to De-Stress

Article by Sierra Filucci, CommonsenseMedia.org

With so much uncertainty over the last couple weeks, lots of families are feeling stressed out. During this difficult time, we hope you'll find time to take care of yourself, and your kids. We've rounded up a few ideas on self-care for the whole family — with the help of media and tech, and sometimes without it.

Meditate We've got [apps for kids and families](#) that can help you visualize a more peaceful setting, align your breath with your yoga poses, or focus on what you're grateful for.

Get Help This collection of [mental health apps](#) might be the answer to a tween or teen who is really struggling but can't get face-to-face care right away.

Stay Active If you're stuck inside, you'll need to get creative to get everyone moving. Set up an obstacle course, play hide-and-seek, and watch some [exercise videos on YouTube](#) as a family.

Dance You may need to order a special controller from Amazon to play one of these [25 dance games](#), but nothing beats a dance party to get the blood flowing and put everyone in a good mood.

Move Around Our collection of [apps, websites, and video games that inspire running, jumping, or, um, conducting music](#) might be the perfect thing to keep things active.

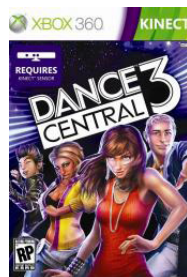
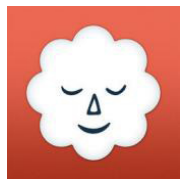
Feel Better Check out these [health-focused apps](#) to pass the time while also getting some tips on eating well, exercising, and even managing the stress of an illness.

Learn About Our Amazing Bodies These [wellness websites](#) can be great resources for kids and teens who are curious about their health. Plenty of conversation starters!

Double Down on Distraction If you're feeling frazzled, the best medicine is a cozy night on the couch with family and laughs. Here are the funniest picks we recommend:

Laugh Together Whether you prefer classic comedies or fresher fare, these [funny movies](#) will force everyone to forget their worries for a while.

Get Goofy This [list of silly movies](#) might not include the finest filmmaking, but for tweens and teens, they tickle the funny bone in just the right place.



Keep Kids Healthy & Learning at Home During School Closures

COVID-19 DAILY SCHEDULE

Before 9:00am	Wake up	Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJ's in laundry
9:00-10:00	Morning walk	Family walk with the dog Yoga if it's raining
10:00-11:00	Academic time	NO ELECTRONICS Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal
11:00-12:00	Creative time	Legos, magnatiles, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc
12:00	Lunch	
12:30PM	Chore time	A - wipe all kitchen table and chairs. B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and desk tops. C - Wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets
1:00-2:30	Quiet time	Reading, puzzles, nap
2:30-4:00	Academic time	ELECTRONICS OK Ipad games, Prodigy, Educational show
4:00-5:00	Afternoon fresh air	Bikes, Walk the dog, play outside
5:00-6:00	Dinner	
6:00-8:00	Free TV time	Kid showers x3
8:00	Bedtime	All kids
9:00PM	Bedtime	All kids who follow the daily schedule & don't fight

Make a daily kid's schedule to offset any boredom.

The kids are all home. You also may be "self-quarantined" from work or from going about your "normal" everyday activities in the outside world. Rather than feeling isolated and bored, take this opportunity to share learning activities with your children. Here are just some ideas to get you started.

Activity Ideas

Start with Meditation. [Headspace](#) is a good app that has kid-friendly content and is the ideal mindful way to start the day.

Learn a language together. Yes, there will be school lessons, but why not take on a family fun project. The [Duolingo app](#) is one to try. [Babbel](#) is offering students three months free access.

Do something crafty each day. Could be just 10 minutes of coloring or something more ambitious. You can also get craft boxes mailed to you. There are a lot out there, here are just a few: [Ann Williams](#) [Cratejoy](#) [SmartArt](#)

Recipe challenge. Let your kids search online and pick a recipe each day. You might be limited on ingredients so start your search with what you have on hand. Check out [Taste of Home](#).

Keep in Touch. Since it's unlikely you will be making trips to see the grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or close friends, have your kids start writing letters. Be creative, stay in touch!

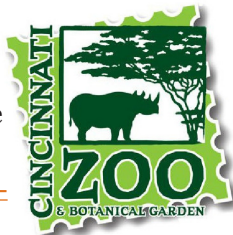
Virtual Tours for Learning & Fun

Welcome to Virtual School Activities! [A collection of sites to live webcams, virtual tours/trips](#), and other miscellaneous fun academic sites.

Thanks to the contributions and ideas of many, what began as a Google Sheet with ideas for virtual schooling during this 2020 crisis has blossomed into this website. If you have ideas for other places to virtually visit, or fun/educational goodies to use while virtually schooling, please feel free to add your idea by emailing me via the contact section toward the bottom of this page. Thank you to all who have helped this list grow! Enjoy!

Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

While the Cincinnati Zoo is closed and kids are home from school, let us help make your children's hiatus from school fun and educational. Join us for a [Home Safari Face-book Live](#) each weekday at 3pm EDT where we will highlight one of our amazing animals and include an activity you can do from home.



New England Aquarium

[New England Aquarium is posting live](#) each day at 11am. Content includes videos with

educators, a behind-the-scenes look at animal care, and fun activities for children.



"Health at Home"

New resources in response to COVID-19 school closures

CATCH.org and "Health at Home"

Just like you, we are trying to keep our kids healthy and active in the midst of Coronavirus-related school closures. To help our families, we've set up a Google Classroom to provide free and easy access to several of [CATCH's evidence-based health, nutrition, and physical education materials](#). These activities require limited space and supervision, and are organized into three sections: Physical Activities, Activity Breaks and Family Health and Nutrition. Use the resources with any children in your care by following the simple Google Classroom access instructions.

Look out for distance education resources – made for remote instruction in the event of long-term school closures – coming out the week of March 22nd.



Hidden Lake, Hopkinton, RI

Ways to Keep Your Body Moving

Rhode Island Hikes Off the Beaten Path

From article by Jen McCaffery, Rhode Island Monthly

Get outside and experience the natural beauty of Rhode Island (but keep a distance of at least six-feet from the group in front of you) to prevent yourself from going stir-crazy. Here are some hikes far from the everyday bustle, according to Ernie Germani, who writes the blog Trails and Walks in Rhode Island.

Connors Farm, Smithfield

Terrain: Two to two and a half mile hike. Moderate with some areas of elevation. *How to get there:* Access the trail at small parking lot located between 20 – 24 Connors Farm Rd. [Information and map.](#)

Ballard Park, Newport

Terrain: A little over a mile of trails. Easy hike. *How to get there:* Located at the intersection of Hazard and Wickham Roads in Newport. Follow the entrance road to a sign with trail map. [Information and a map.](#)

Westconnaug Meadows, Scituate

Terrain: About a mile and a half of trail. Easy hike. *How to get there:* The trailhead is by the parking area for a ballfield on George Washington Parkway in Scituate. [Information and map.](#)

Steere Hill Farm/Heritage Park, Glocester

Terrain: More than five miles of trails. Moderate, with some elevation. *How to get there:* It's off Putnam Pike in Glocester. [Information and map.](#)

Hidden Lake, Hopkinton

Terrain: "You have to do some scrambling up and down on" *How to get there:* The trailhead is on Camp Yawgoog Road in Hopkinton. (It's Boy Scout property.) [Information and map.](#)

Ben Utter Trail/Stepstone Falls

Terrain: There are some rocky spots, trail is about a mile and a half each way and fairly easy. *How to get there:* Located in the Arcadia Wildlife Management Area on Plain Road in West Greenwich. [Information and map.](#)

RI Schools Offering Free Lunches for Students During Closures

Due to the closure of schools, free "Grab and Go" meals are available (March 16th - March 20th) for children throughout Rhode Island. New sites are still being added so please check back or contact your school district or charter school for more options.

All of these sites are operating on the same basis, which is that anyone aged 18 or under who shows up gets a free meal. There are no ID or residency requirements, but the child must be present; schools cannot give a meal to an adult on behalf of a child.



CHARIHO

CHARIHO Regional High School, 453 Switch Rd., Richmond,
9am-11am

Coventry

Rice Memorial Field, Knotty Oak Rd., 12noon-1pm

Narragansett

Narragansett High School, 245 South Pier Rd., Narragansett,
10am-11am

Available free of charge to ALL Rhode Island students 18 and under no matter where they may reside. [Full information here](#)

North Kingstown

McGinn Park, School St., 11:30am-11:50am
(inclement weather site is Davisville Middle School)
Wilson Park, Tower Hill Rd., 11am-11:20am
(inclement weather site is North Kingstown High School)

Warwick

Oakland Beach Elementary, 383 Oakland Beach Ave.,
11:30am-1pm
Pilgrim High School, 111 Pilgrim Pkwy., 11:30am-1pm
Toll Gate High School, 575 Centerville Rd., 11:30am-1pm

West Warwick

Greenbush Elementary, 27 Greenbush Rd., 11am-1pm
Wakefield Hills Elementary, 505 Wakefield Rd., 11am-1pm
West Warwick High School, 1 Webster Knight Drive, 11am-1pm

West Greenwich

West Greenwich Fire Dept., 830 Nooseneck Hill Rd., 8-10am

Westerly

Johnny Cake Center, 23 Industrial Drive, 12noon-1pm
Springbrook Elementary, 39 Springbrook Rd., 11am-1pm
Tower Street Community, 93 Tower St., 11am-1pm

For a Statewide listing from the Rhode Island Department of Health, [click here](#).



Connecting During Covid-19

Each week Bob Houghtaling interviews guests who delve into substance abuse, mental health and social concerns.

This week, Bob discusses the impact of the Coronavirus and how we can connect and support each other, even with required social distancing. [Watch the Podcast](#)



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