

Kids In The Middle remains dedicated to offering support to our children and families throughout this uncertainty. We recognize that many of our families are most likely experiencing additional stress with school closings, adjustments to work, etc. In situations such as these, it can become easy to ignore one's mental health and well-being. Below we have included some helpful tips for supporting your children, but also supporting yourself as a parent. Stay well!

### Provide an atmosphere of open communication:

- Children are more likely to internalize emotions, such as worry and anxiety, rather than openly expressing them. Studies have shown that this can be even more prevalent in children who have experienced separation/divorce in their family. Providing children with a safe place where they can express their concerns about COVID-19 will help them process, rather than internalize, their worries.
- Practice patience as your child navigates their feelings. Many times, it is easier for children to express anger or act out than express other difficult/uncomfortable emotions, such as fear, worry, anxiety, etc. Remain calm and use caring/supportive language when exploring emotions with your child.
- Often as adults, it can be difficult to see a child upset or hurting, and it is hard not to try to fix things or to cheer them. However, it is normal and should be expected for children (and adults) to experience a variety of overwhelming emotions, especially in the current circumstances. Often a child isn't seeking a solution, but rather to simply feel heard and supported.
- It is helpful for children to see their parent's model appropriate ways to express emotions. Parents sharing their worries with their children (age-appropriate information), and modeling how they are effectively managing or coping with their worries, can assist children in learning how to express their emotions more openly.



### Connect as a family:

- It can be tempting to watch the news and social media for updates continually. However, setting aside time to come together as a family can be incredibly beneficial and essential. Reserve time to turn off and tune out all the media in order to spend time together as a family.
- Kids enjoy playing games, reading books, engaging in a variety of arts and crafts, putting together puzzles, and watching movies with their families.

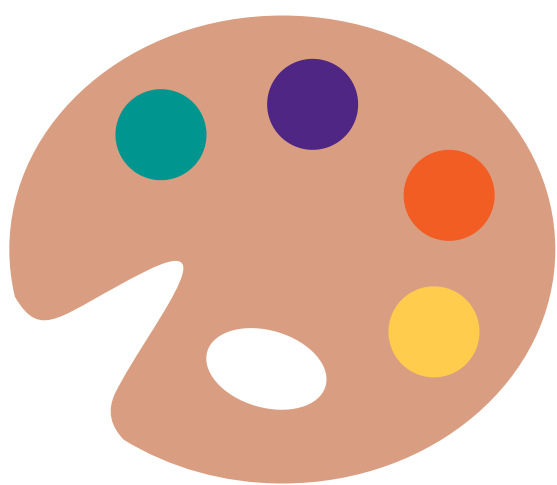
### Practice mindfulness:

- Yoga is a great mindfulness exercise and is proven to decrease anxiety. If you are new to yoga, there are some great videos on YouTube to help get you started.
- Meditation is another helpful tool in practicing mindfulness and decreasing anxiety. Apps, such as Calm and Insight Timer, have guided meditations for all ages.
- Engage in a guided walking meditation in your house. The best part of walking meditations is that you do not need much space. YouTube and guided meditation apps, like the ones mentioned above, have some beautiful, short guided walking meditations that you can utilize.
- Mindfulness coloring sheets are also a great way to relax and practice mindfulness



### Practice self-care:

- Remember, parents, you cannot effectively care for and support your children if you do not make time to practice taking care of yourself.
- During stressful times, it is important to dedicate a portion of the day to self-care. Below are some ways you can implement self-care into your day:
  - Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
  - Exercise regularly
  - Unplug from electronics
  - Get plenty of sleep
  - Practice mindfulness by incorporating yoga and/or meditation
  - Engage your creative side with music and/or art
  - Self-reflect through journaling
  - Create a self-care plan
  - Read a book
  - Call a friend
  - Have a PJ day



### Ensure connection with both parents:

- Scheduling changes may occur for children as to when they are with mom or dad, and this can be difficult to understand.
- Provide opportunities for children to connect with the other parent through call, FaceTime, or even drawing pictures/writing letters.
- When possible, be flexible with your co-parent throughout this time. Remember, your child needs the love and support of both parents.

