

HELPFUL TIPS IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH INTENSE FEELINGS

It is normal to feel intense feelings

This is a time that many people are facing strong, and what seems like permanent, feelings. You are not alone and the feelings are not permanent.

- Your feelings are a normal response to what is happening around us.
- Situations and our feelings about them come and go. This too shall pass like any other situation and feeling!

Common reactions to our current circumstances

Feeling worried about loved ones and their safety, feeling powerless, uncertainty about the future, anticipation about a negative financial impact, isolation, boredom, sadness, etc.

These responses to the crisis can activate a fight or flight reaction. This is not a healthy place to be for too long. It is okay in the short term, like when you come across a bear, but not that helpful to feel like there is a bear outside your house 24/7 and it is invisible.

What about the children?

Have little ones running around? They too, are experiencing stress and feelings about their situation. What a great time to teach them and learn with them ways manage anxiety or any intense feeling they are having.

Remember that the best way to allay their fears is to remain calm yourself and talk with them about what is happening in a developmentally appropriate way. It is less about what you say, and more about what you do that will impact them. It is okay (even more than okay!) if you run around with them. Learn about what is normal for children their age. It will help you to understand why they are acting the way you do, and help you to lessen how much you judge them and your own parenting ability.

WAYS TO MANAGE INTENSE FEELINGS

So now that we know we are normal and responding to a difficult situation, what can we do about it to feel better in a helpful and healthy way? These intense emotions that come up can build up and need a healthy outlet. Below are some suggestions or helpful tips. Take what you need and do not feel limited to this list!

Mindfulness-

Our thoughts create our feelings. Two people can react very differently to the same situation based on how they each think about what has happened. For example, one parent can see their child's public tantrum as willful, disrespectful, and embarrassing and have a fear that people will think they are a terrible parent. Another parent can view the tantrum as a normal developmental reaction to a child being tired, under stress, or hungry, and recognize that other parents have experienced what they are going through and understand their circumstances. Each of those two

parents will experience very different feelings as a result of how they are thinking about the situation. So our goal is to slow down our thoughts until we can gain a helpful perspective on our situation.

Mindfulness is fully paying attention to what you are doing *in this very moment*. In this age of multi-tasking, many of us have forgotten how to focus on one thing at a time. It also means that our mind is focused on many things at once, enabling us to worry, no matter what we are doing. Have you ever lost track of time? What were you doing? You were probably focused, mindful of one specific task, and everything else left your mind, completely.

- For you
 - Try this experiment. Take a raisin, a slice of an apple or (whatever!) Hold it in your hand. Look at it very closely and observe it's size, shape and feel. Take a very slow, small bite of it. Put it very slowly in your mouth. Begin to chew it very slowly. Notice the texture, taste, feel on your tongue. Keep paying attention until you swallow it. After you have swallowed it, consider, was I thinking about anything else? Did what I was thinking about before I started this exercise go away for a short time? Hopefully you experienced a little relief from what was on your mind.
 - If you apply this mindfulness to washing the dishes (feeling the temperature of the water, looking carefully at the dish or pot or utensil you are washing, rinsing mindfully and focusing on placing the dish in the drainboard) your work, walking, talking with a friend or family member or anything you are doing, you can learn to quiet your mind. (Even if for just a brief period)
- For the children
 - Teach them how to be mindful, as well.
- Resources:
 - Stop, Breathe & Think app: Explains how to begin meditating and the benefits of mindfulness. Has thirty free guided meditations to help with stress, anxiety, depression, focus, compassion and sleep.
 - HEADSPACE app: has short "SOS" meditation for panic, anxiety or stress. Includes 10 guided meditations sessions that are free.
 - What is Mindfulness:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>
 - 5-Minute Meditation You Can Do Anywhere
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inpok4MKVLM>
 - 3 Minutes Body Scan Meditation - for kids and adults
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihwcw_ofuME

Breathing

Your breath is your anchor in the storm! The more you practice focusing on your breathing, the more easily you can apply it when you face a stressful situation.

- For you
 - You can Youtube breathing exercises or guided meditations.
- For your children

- Youtube has some great videos on guided fairy or mermaid meditations.
 - Fairy meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R05SOqmW5PI>
 - Breathing exercise for kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29e4rRMrV4>

Connection

Connection with people who help us feel safe can reduce that feeling of flight, fight, or freeze. We have to physically disconnect at this time from anyone outside our homes but does not mean we can not stay connected.

- For you
 - Schedule video call with friends or loved ones! You can still have Sunday dinner just do it through video chatting!
- For the children
 - Schedule video calls with their friends and favorite relatives.
- Resources
 - Smartphone apps such as Snapchat, Zoom, Facetime, Houseparty
 - At home paint night tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeIhdB5nGxc>

Movement

Movement can get us out of heads and back into our bodies.

- For you and the children
 - Have a dance party!
 - Go for a walk, if you can!
 - There are plenty of free yoga videos and dance music on Youtube.
- **Resources:**
 - Dance Songs:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWgTqLCLE8k>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beF4Ywct-Uo>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZ-SwJjkSyw>
 - Mommy and me Dance Workout
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tj4ew7n42Bg>
 - Yoga for adults (beginners):
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7AYKMP6rOE>
 - Yoga for Kids:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2owM2ogGb8>

Gratitude

Sometimes anxiety can make us focus on only the “bad stuff,” “potential bad stuff,” and “potential bad stuff as a result of the potential bad stuff.” But even in the midst of difficult circumstances there are always some positive parts to it.

- For you

- Flip the script and look at any positive aspects to what is going on in your life. Ask yourself what can you be grateful in this moment.
- Make a gratitude list
 - It can be very simple. I have 2 hands to hold my children. I have vision to see. I am alive today.
- For the children
 - Introduce them to gratitude and help them start a list of what they have for which they can be grateful
 - Exercise
 - Gratitude from A to Z – Write out the alphabet and think of something you are grateful for that goes along with each letter.

Nutrition

What you eat can impact your emotions. Ever feel anxious or hyper because you have too much coffee or sugar

- For you and the children
 - Eat healthy foods and give your body what it needs to function optimally!
- Resource
 - https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/how-to-eat-healthy-at-home_ca_5e74bbcbc5b63c3b648e95ac

Sleep

- For you and the children
 - Get the recommended sleep! turn off or limit your phone usage at least one hour before bed is recommended.

Extra Support

Sometimes we need a little extra help and there is nothing wrong with that.

- For you
 - Plenty of therapists and support groups have adapted to social distancing requirements and are available online, video chatting, etc. Reach out for help.
- For the children
 - Soft noises can help you and your children to sleep
- Resource
 - 8 hours of rain:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yp60yUb6nYo>

Play/ Laugh/Have Fun

Find things to break up the seriousness of what's happening.

- For you and the children
 - Watch Youtube funny cat videos or laughing babies.
 - Play a game. You can play a game with family online (ex: puzzlebreak).
- Resources:

- Sing along songs:
 - For adults:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KGe_4leh_Y
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SKFwtgUJHs>
 - For kids:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KKZWK59e1w>
- Family Games Online:
 - <https://www.gamesgames.com/games/family-games>
 - <https://famisafe.wondershare.com/family/family-game-apps.html>

Limit Worry times-

- For you
 - Limit the amount of exposure to triggering information
 - Set up times to worry.
 - Only allow yourself to worry during certain time frames. The recommended time is no more than 45 minutes. Try to reduce your worry time with each passing week or day.
 - Focus on solutions to the concern
- For the children
 - Show by your behavior how to limit worry time and find solutions