



CHILD MIND[®]
INSTITUTE

WORLD
MENTAL
HEALTH
DAY

October 10, 2020



Tips for Managing Stress and Anxiety This Winter

If you're worried about how you'll handle the coronavirus crisis once the days get shorter and temperatures drop, you're not alone. But while winter might be a challenge this year, there are strategies you can use to cope with stress and keep spirits up — both yours and your kids'.

Focus on what you can control.

Uncertainty is uncomfortable, but right now it's unavoidable. Try to make flexibility your family's norm and avoid getting caught up in worst-case scenarios. Instead, engage your kids in planning the things you can control: What fun indoor activities can we do this winter? How about new traditions if the holidays look different this year?

For more mental health resources for children and families, childmind.org/WMHD.



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Maintain social connections.

Connecting with friends and family might feel like a luxury, but social support is crucial in stressful times. It doesn't have to be elaborate — try five-minute phone calls with distant friends or a short socially distant walk with a neighbor. If you've been socializing outside in the warm weather, now is also the time to plan ways to keep that up. Consider doing an inventory of everyone's winter gear or making a list of outdoor activities that you can do with friends to keep moving and socialize at the same time.

Set ground rules early — and stick to them.

Quarantine fatigue is no joke, and it can be tempting to loosen up family rules about things like socializing indoors. But in order to keep everyone safe this winter, it's important to know what your family's boundaries are. Is your family part of a quarantine pod? Open a conversation about winter rules. Are extended family members planning holiday gatherings? Start figuring out if and how you can attend safely. By getting a jump on these conversations now, you'll avoid stress and awkwardness down the road.

Build your self-care toolkit.

You might not be able to avoid stress, but you can plan ahead for it. Make a list of quick stress reduction techniques that you know work for you. This might include mindfulness techniques, breathing exercises, favorite songs, short exercise videos or calming activities like playing with a pet. You can even encourage your kids to build their own self-care toolkits. That way, you'll all have easy strategies ready to turn to in tough moments.

Don't hesitate to seek help.

Anxiety is common (especially right now!) but it doesn't have to be part of your new normal. If you or your child are experiencing symptoms of anxiety (like trouble sleeping, withdrawing from loved ones, or constantly mulling over the same worries) and informal strategies aren't helping, it might be time to get support from a professional. Many mental health professionals offer telehealth sessions that you can access safely from home.

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