TOP PARENTING TIPS
FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS DURING COVID-19

1. **Reassure your children that your family is your top priority**
   Say something like "I'm your parent, it's my job to keep you safe and we are doing everything we can."

2. **Take care of yourself the best you can**
   Deal with your own distress by taking actions that give you a better sense of personal control. Stress management skills such as mindfulness and/or deep breathing can help reduce stress. Keep healthy and safe (good personal hygiene, exercise daily, eat well, get enough sleep, avoid using alcohol or drugs to lessen stress). Avoid behavior that might increase your stress. For example, while it is helpful to keep informed about COVID-19, constant checking on your screens can increase stress.

3. **Make sure your children know you are ready to talk**
   Children need to be able to talk to parents about their concerns and have their questions answered. When a child wants to talk about their feelings, stop what you are doing and listen carefully. Avoid telling your child how they should feel ("That's silly. You shouldn't be scared about that.") Let children know it is OK to be worried. Talking or drawing can help children get in touch with their feelings and figure out what they are anxious about.

4. **Be truthful in answering children's questions**
   Find out what they know about the issue before answering. Keep answers simple. Get information from trusted sources (e.g. official government websites) rather than social media.

5. **Maintain everyday family routines**
   Keep to usual rising times, mealtimes, and bedtimes. Every family is different. Involve children in working out any new routine (e.g. have a daily plan of activities for school-aged children who are at home).

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6 **Have a family plan of action**
Involve children in preparing the plan. As situations can change quickly (e.g. new travel restrictions, school closures), update the plan as needed.

7 **Have plenty of interesting things to do at home**
Busy children are less likely to be bored and misbehave. With your child, help create a list of 20 activities that will keep them busy (not just screen time).

8 **Take notice of behavior you like**
Think about the values, skills, and behaviors you wish to encourage in your children at this very difficult time. There are many opportunities to teach your children important life skills (e.g. being caring, helpful, cooperative, getting on well with siblings, taking turns). Use plenty of praise and positive attention to encourage behavior you like. Give them positive attention letting them know you are pleased by telling them what they have just done ("That's a lovely card you have written to your grandmother. That's so kind. She will really appreciate that.")

9 **Help children learn to tolerate more uncertainty**
The COVID-19 crisis creates uncertainty for everyone. Parents need to find a way to accept uncertainty and, through your actions and words show this acceptance to your children. It's OK to say, "I don't know; let's find out what we can." Big changes to children's lives can be hard and are often scary. They can also create opportunities for learning new skills.

10 **Reach out and connect with loved ones**
Make greater use of phones, online communication tools (video conferencing) and social media to keep in touch with family, friends, and neighbors. Help others in need who are going through a tough time and are more vulnerable (e.g. parents/caregivers with disabilities, older people).

Written by Matthew R Sanders and Vanessa E Cobham
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