

TIPS SHEET:

Parenting During the Pandemic



PREVENTING PARENT BURNOUT — find tips below, as well as further information [here](#).



- **Make a list of your child's core strengths.** Write down her good qualities, even if they haven't been visible lately. Find ways to talk about these to your partner, your friends and your child. "This morning I ran across that poem you wrote about _____, and it reminded me how creative you are. I've always admired that about you."
- **Recall fun and funny times.** Telling a humorous family incident or recounting a tale of your own foibles can help everyone feel connected. Silly baby stories, grade school antics and memories of times you embarrassed yourself are great ways to get started laughing ... and remembering that good times do happen. Remembering more recent moments of happiness or enjoyment helps, too.
- **Practice simple acts of kindness.** When using words is difficult, we can often still get through with gestures. Think back to what "said love" to her when she was little, or what used to soothe him when he was upset. Arriving at your teen's bedroom door with a gentle, "Hey, I thought maybe you'd like this" and a favorite treat can remind you both that you care, even if the offer is declined.
- **Smile when he walks in the room.** The look of surprise on a troubled child's face when he is greeted with joy instead of concern is a startling reminder of the importance of the need to express our affection in words and affect. A cheerful, "Oh, I was just thinking of you!" can shift both your heart and his to a better place.
- **Grow your empathy.** Patience and perseverance blossom when we see parallels between our own emotional landscape and that of our children. When you're feeling overwhelmed, it's eye-opening to consider that this may be how your son feels all day, every day.
- **Touch base, literally.** Sometimes we retreat from difficulty without realizing it. If your child craves contact and you've pulled back physically, add "touch base three times daily" to your to-do list. A quick back rub when he's hunched over homework, or a gentle hand on his shoulder while you're asking a question can help you stay connected.



SCREEN TIME DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

- **Set boundaries when you can.**
- **Offer additional screen time as a bonus.**
- **Keep a schedule.** Maybe the 30 minutes before dinner are always open for screen time. That kind of structure helps kids know what to expect and cuts down on their requests for screens at other times. Plus, it gives you space to schedule other tasks at a time when you know your children will be busy.
- **Model healthy screen use.** Now more than ever, it's helpful to lead by example. If you make a point of setting aside your own screens during set times, your children will be more likely to do the same without putting up a fight. Plus, taking breaks from tech has the added benefit of helping you limit your own media intake and giving you moments of mindfulness with your kids.
- **Be creative.** Work with your child to come up with fun ways to connect with friends online. A Zoom graduation party might not be quite like the real thing, but it's still a way to help your child feel close to peers and loved ones during social distancing. Maybe your child and their friends would enjoy setting up their screens in the kitchen and baking together or watching a movie together while texting about it. Remember that online games can also offer genuine social connection for kids, so it might make sense to rethink your usual rules about gaming.
- **Consider your child's usual social schedule.** Thinking back on your child's regular social life before coronavirus can be a good way to figure out how much social screen time makes sense. For instance, if your child used to chat with friends at school and then have a playdate on Saturday, maybe it makes sense for them to spend short bursts of time talking with friends during the week and schedule a bigger activity for the weekend.

