HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES

PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19
TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

DR. ROZEN M. ALEX, C.PSYCH
Psychologist, University of Ottawa Heart Institute
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

OBJECTIVES

- Understand general issues regarding “normal” parenting during pandemic
- Understand signals/signs of parenting disruptions
- Understand signals/signs of stresses in children and youth
- Review some general strategies to use during this timeframe
January 25: first presumptive case in Ontario (Canada) and is put in isolation at Sunnybrook Hospital.

March 12: Ontario schools ordered to shut down two weeks following March Break.

March 17: Premier of Ontario declares state of Emergency.


June 12: Phase 2 open in Ontario
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

PHASE 1:

• Everyone came home at the same time
• Organization, planning and monitoring had to occur at the same time
• Self care had to be in the mix as well.
ONTARIO COVID-19 Child, Youth and Adult Mental Health and Addiction Survey

BEHAVIOURS

- 64% → watching more TV
- 56% → more time online
- 46% → “changes in eating habits”
- 44% → less exercise
- 40% → more video games
- 28% → more tension in household
- 42% → increased substance use/ gambling / alcohol use
- 9% → are not coping with any of the above

April 28-30, 2020!!!!
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

STRUCTURED PARENTING
- Social media/internet
- Structured play
- School
- Travel/Location

“FREE RANGE” PARENTING
- All together
- More TV time
- Less structure
- Increase creativity
PARENTING NOW: HAVE WE STOPPED BAKING YET?

PARENTING DISRUPTIONS - SELF
- Working and Parenting at same time
- Stresses
- Self Care losses
- Role Strain

PARENTING DISRUPTIONS - OTHER
- Loss of Supports
- Loss of Structure
- Emotional/Behavioral Changes in Children
- Dual Roles
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

When Demands > Coping

Coping Ability

Demands / Expectations / Stresses
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

DEMANDS / EXPECTATIONS / STRESSES

• Reduce the demands, expectations and stressors on you
  • Reduce self-imposed expectations, e.g. practice self-compassion
    • Reduce external expectations that are unrealistic
  • Don’t focus on what you cannot control

• Reduce the demands, expectations and stressors on you
  • Reduce self-imposed expectations, e.g. practice self-compassion
    • Reduce external expectations that are unrealistic
  • Don’t focus on what you cannot control
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

COPING ABILITY

- Improving your coping ability
  - Do focus on what you can control:
    - Looking after yourself.
      - “Putting on your own oxygen mask.”
      - Self-compassion: Be kind to yourself like you would to a good friend.
      - When your own needs are met, it is easier to stay calm (and not yell at the kids), model empathy, kindness for the kids.
    - Ask yourself, “What do you need for your mental health?” and ensure those things are in your daily schedule
  - Build your support network and team.
    - Make sure you create your bubbles with self and child-care in mind first.
MAKE (OR THINK ABOUT) YOUR COVID SCHEDULE

• Predictability and routines help children and adults feel safe.
• Include key routines for kids and adult mental health
• Remember:
  • Schedules are a tool to help you out, not to stress you out.
  • If the schedule is stressful, change it...
    • More structured
    • More flexible

DON’T NEGLECT SLEEP

• For all emotions (anxiety, sadness, anger etc) and behavioral issues like inattention/impulsivity
  ○ Thoughts,
  ○ Feelings,
  ○ Behaviours.
  ○ Body Complaints/Sleep Etc.

• How to Help
  • Validate of feelings, empathize, acceptance
    ○ “This is a stressful time. Its okay to feel upset / mad / sad / scared…”
  • Comfort, co-regulate, Avoid avoidance
    ○ “Let me give you a hug. Its good to cry and let out your feelings.”
  • Is your child calmer? Consider rational thought:
    ○ Find the “silver lining”, or a way to see “meaning and hope” from the situation.
    ○ “I like the way we get to go for a lot of walks these days.
  • Emphasize positives that are the same as before:
CREATE A COPING / SELF-REGULATION PLAN

- A Coping / Self-Regulation Plan has all the key essentials written down.
- Read more here, along with link to a downloadable template.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELING</th>
<th>WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE IN THIS FEELING?</th>
<th>WHAT TRIGGERS OR MAKES ME FEEL THIS WAY?</th>
<th>WHAT HELPS WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN OTHERS DO TO HELP WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BORED</td>
<td>“I’m bored, there’s nothing to do!” Healthy coping, e.g. helping out family Unhealthy coping, e.g. fighting with siblings, video game addiction</td>
<td>Lack of routines, lack of activities with purpose, meaning</td>
<td>Have healthy daily routines</td>
<td>• Allow boredom to encourage creativity AND • Daily routines, activities to give sufficient: • Sensory input (e.g. sound, visual, touch, movement) • Emotional • Stimulation. • Social stimulation. • Intellectual stimulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEELING</td>
<td>WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE IN THIS FEELING?</td>
<td>WHAT TRIGGERS OR MAKES ME FEEL THIS WAY?</td>
<td>WHAT HELPS WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</td>
<td>WHAT CAN OTHERS DO TO HELP WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressed</td>
<td>Annoyed, irritable</td>
<td>• Too much noise</td>
<td>Talking to family or friends</td>
<td>• Just listen, and don’t give advice unless I ask for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEELING</td>
<td>WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE IN THIS FEELING?</td>
<td>WHAT TRIGGERS OR MAKES ME FEEL THIS WAY?</td>
<td>WHAT HELPS WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</td>
<td>WHAT CAN OTHERS DO TO HELP WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERWHELMED</td>
<td>When my face gets red, swearing</td>
<td>• Too much noise&lt;br&gt;• Being tired</td>
<td>• Not talking about things.&lt;br&gt;• Going to my room and having things quiet.</td>
<td>• Do accept I’m accept.&lt;br&gt;• Don’t try giving advice.&lt;br&gt;• Don’t add to my stress by shouting or raising your voice.&lt;br&gt;• Do give space&lt;br&gt;• Is it a crisis?&lt;br&gt;• Call a crisis line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEELING</td>
<td>WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE IN THIS FEELING?</td>
<td>WHAT TRIGGERS OR MAKES ME FEEL THIS WAY?</td>
<td>WHAT HELPS WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</td>
<td>WHAT CAN OTHERS DO TO HELP WHEN I’M THIS WAY?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CALM    | Engage, content, happy              | Spending time outside, with family        | • Getting enough sleep, nature time  
• No screens past 8 PM | • Ask how my day was and how things are going 
• Ensure healthy routines. |
RESOURCES:
EMOTIONAL COPING

- eMentalHealth.ca:
  - Upsetting News Events: Helping Your Children and Youth Cope
- eMentalHealth.ca:
  - Nightmares: Helping Children & Youth with Problem Nightmares
- Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street
- GoNoodle.com
- Stop, Breathe & Think Mindfulness App for Kids
- Spaghetti Toes relaxation exercise
- Kids Help Phone Breathing Balloon
- Mighty Moe free anxiety workbook for kids
HEARTWISE WEBINAR SERIES: PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

RESOURCES:

EMOTIONAL COPING

- https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/covid19?gclid=Cj0KCQjwgJv4BRCrARIsAB17Jj6blKXSO0FaW7sF0Mzt6dNha_hoFqJbbilgZPYqy2dImVZYakSRxoaAv-kEALw_wCB covid copig
- Emental Health Guides
  - Sensory Strategies for Self-Regulation, Stress and Calming
  - Safety Plan
  - Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
  - eMental Health - Depression in Children and Youth: Information for Parents and Caregivers
- Sesame Street: Kermit And Elmo Discuss Happy And Sad
- Emotionary by Funny Feelings®
RESOURCES:
EMOTIONAL COPING

- eMentalHealth.ca: Helping Your Children and Youth Be More Active!
- eMentalHealth.ca:
- Nature and Why It’s Essential For Kids’ Brains: Information for Parents and Caregivers
- Child Mind Institute: Why Kids Need to Spend Time in Nature
- CHEO Covid Resources quick sheets
WORKING AT HOME WITH CHILDREN AROUND

• We are trying to parent, teach, and work at the same time.
  • Or we have to go in
  • No “off” time
• Acceptance tip
  • Have your kids wandered into the room?
    • Pre warn colleagues
    • Use resources available
    • Don’t be a hero
• ROUTINE AND SCHEDULING
### COVID-19 DAILY SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 9:00am</td>
<td>Wake up; Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJs in laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Morning walk; Family walk with the dog; Yoga if it’s raining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Academic time; NO ELECTRONICS; Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Creative time; Legos, magnets, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30PM</td>
<td>Chore time; A - wipe all kitchen table and chairs, B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and desk tops, C - Wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-2:30</td>
<td>Quiet time; Reading, puzzles, nap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30-4:00</td>
<td>Academic time; ELECTRONICS OK; Ipad games, Prodigy, Educational show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00-5:00</td>
<td>Afternoon fresh air; Bikes, Walk the dog, play outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00-6:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00-8:00</td>
<td>Free TV time; Kid showers x3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00PM</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WORKING AT HOME

#### Scheduling

- **OVERCOMMUNICATE.** Absolute off limit times, other needs.
- Don’t think in typical work hours.
  - Take breaks together, re-organize and keep going
- Use Electronics well
  - Educational games, tv/TVO shows, Brain Games.
- Discuss at the end of the day-worked didn’t work.
WORKING AT HOME

Hybrid Schooling

• We are trying to parent, teach, and work at the same time.
  • Discuss with older children schedules ahead of time
  • Communication back to school, particularly if LDs or BXs are issues
• Shared bubbling with other families/friends the same age.
Q1
4 and 7 year old fighting more becoming aggressive recommendations?

• Siblings have fights and disagreements when sibling A wants (or expects) one thing, and sibling B wants (or expects) another thing. When triggered, siblings go into the yellow zone, or red zone. Boundary violations.

• Are they in the red / yellow zone (e.g. actively verbally or physically aggressive)? If so, then separate each child.
  — Parent: “Okay, I see both of you are very upset. You are each going to take a time out in your bedrooms, and when you are both calmer, we’ll work through this.”

• Are both parties calmed down enough to talk? If so, then talk separately if its very sensitive. Otherwise, talk with both together.
  • Ask each of them “What was that fight about?”; “What got you so upset?”
  • Validate any emotions they are having, e.g. anger, frustration, sad, rejected, etc.
  • Try to problem-solve (only when people are calm): “Any ideas how we can resolve this?”
  • Ask “What do you think we might do next time to avoid getting into a fight?”
  • Ask “And if we do get into a fight, any ideas what we should do to help everyone calm down?”
  • Try to then resolve the conflict
  • Try to then plan ahead so that future conflicts are avoided
  • Provide some individual time with each child daily

• For more information
  • How to stop siblings fighting
    https://www.ahaparenting.com/ask-the-doctor-1/how-to-stop-siblings-fighting
Q2
What to do if a child is shutting down/withdrawing and does not want to talk?

• Children typically withdraw when they are feeling sad or anxious, or due to opposition.

• The role of effective coping skills is important in promoting resiliency, self-efficacy and a sense of mastery.

• Help the child identify their zone if they are not overwhelmed with emotion. (red or blue)

• If they do not want to talk see if you can identify other ways to support them (behaviors, comfort, activity) to promote a sense of mastery within the situation.

• Model naming emotions and problem solving as best as you can.

• Children tend to shut down for emotional non oppositional reasons because they cannot name what they are feeling or because they feel embarrassed. Validate feelings of anxiety or sadness are valid.

• Recall past experiences when your child successfully managed a challenging moment and encourage them that they will be able to work through whatever they are feeling.

• Remind them that you are there when the child is ready.

• For Further support contact

http://www.connexontario.ca/
Q3

What supports are available to a single parent?

- We require supports. As a working single parent, making sure you expand your bubble is important.
- Finding other parents willing to share some days activities are important to include in your bubble.
- See what access you have to daycare/summer programming.
- Talk to teachers and other supports that you had pre-covid.

- Talk to children about what teamwork is required when they are with you.

- For Peer Support
  - [https://www.facebook.com/groups/singlemomsbuddyottawa/?ref=pages_profile_groups_tab&source_id=114495086574780](https://www.facebook.com/groups/singlemomsbuddyottawa/?ref=pages_profile_groups_tab&source_id=114495086574780)