

## CARING REASSURANCE

Providing caring reassurance can seem daunting during these uncertain times. It may feel as if things are completely topsy-turvy. Self-care is particularly important at times like these. Parents must take time to care for themselves so they can help create a positive, calm, and nurturing home.

### FEELINGS GAUGE

Monitoring and discussing feelings can be reassuring for everyone. Children may need time to decompress and talk about their feelings – and you may, too! Children can monitor their feelings using the feelings gauge below.

- Feelings in the **Green Zone** are able to be handled in a productive manner
- Feelings in the **Yellow Zone** may require some support by talking to a trusted adult or taking a break
- Feelings in the **Red Zone** may be very overwhelming and require help from a trusted adult



Create your own Feelings Gauge using construction paper or a paper plate at home.

### CREATING CARING REASSURANCE

- **Provide reassurance.** Children may repeatedly ask questions about COVID-19. Calmly explain that many doctors and scientists are working very hard to learn how to prevent the spread of the virus as well as how to treat those who become sick. Remind them that there are things they can do to stay safe:
  - Wash hands for 20 seconds
  - Keeping a safe distance from other people
  - Staying at home
  - Avoid touching your face
  - Cover mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze
  - Wearing a mask to help others stay safe
- **Watch carefully for signs of concern.** Children may not express themselves verbally. Instead, their actions may indicate their feelings. Watch for changes in behavior such as, crying, being clingy, or having difficulty sleeping. Children may also want to sleep too much or complain of headaches or tummy aches. These behaviors and physical indicators may reveal that your child is having a hard time emotionally. Reassure your children that you are there for them.

- **Screen what you child sees and hears.** It is important for parents to keep informed of the latest information on COVID-19. However, the information provided in the media can be frightening and overwhelming. Be aware of what you child sees and hears. Be prepared to listen to your child’s concerns and answer their questions to provide reassurance.
  - **Set a good example.** Children follow the example of the adults in their lives. Children often emulate their parents. When children see that the adults in their lives are scared, stressed, and upset, they too will become scared, stressed, and upset. Reassure children with statements such as, “Sometimes I feel upset and worried, but we will get through this together.” “I know we are safe at home.” “It is ok to be disappointed that we have to cancel plans or cannot go to work and school – I feel that way, too. But this will not last forever.” Try to present a calm and reassuring attitude for your children. Demonstrate safe preventative actions to avoid contracting the disease and express compassion for those who are suffering from the disease.
  - **Following routines.** Try to keep as many routines in place as possible to help children feel a sense of continuity and control. Maintain a normal bedtime and wake up schedule. Follow your usual meal times. Have children help to create new routines such as family game night or evening story time.
  - **Take time to relax.** Children and adults need time to relax. Even a few minutes to take a break can be helpful. Deep breathing can be rejuvenating. Practice deep breathing with your children.
    - Find a comfortable place to sit.
    - Close your eyes or look at a specific “focus” spot.
    - Take a deep breath in and blow all the air out.
    - Breathe in for 3 seconds (filling lungs completely with air) and exhale for 5 seconds (pushing all of the air out of the lungs).
    - Repeat 3 to 5 times
- Variations:**
- Have children hold up a tissue and blow on it as they exhale
  - Have children lay on their back with hands on their tummy and notice how their tummy rises and falls as they breathe.

