

CREATING A NEW NORMAL



For many families, their current way of life is quite different than it was just a few short weeks ago. Children are not going to school, parents may be working from home or out of work due to widespread closures, sports and recreational activities are cancelled, and time spent outside the home is limited. All of these changes can leave children and adults with a sense of loss and uncertainty. To give mental health a boost, and help cultivate order for your family, it is important to take control and develop a new normal for parents and children alike. Point out to children the things that have not changed and help them understand how things have changed. To help children feel a sense of control, use the THINK, FEEL, ACT strategy. When dealing with something new, ask you child what they think, how they feel, and how they will act.

For example:

I **think** it is strange to do my schoolwork at home. I **feel** frustrated that I can't ask the teacher for help. I will **act** by asking my mom if she will help me when she has finished working.

I **think** it is no fun to be away from my friends. I **feel** lonely. I can **act** by video calling my friend and playing a game together.

KEEPING IT THE SAME

Many things can stay the same. Continuing previous routines helps to maintain a sense of control for your children.

- Continue routine bed and wake up times.
- Continue to serve meals at designated times.
- Continue previous family activities, like movie night or reading a book together before bed.

CREATING SOMETHING NEW

Many new routines will need to be established.

- Determine school time. While this may be flexible, create a designated time for school work.
- Determine play time. Don't forget the importance of scheduling time to play.
- Determine quiet time. Many parents are working from home or working hard to navigate social services for their families. They may need a designated time to have a video conference or to work quietly on a report. Have the children help make Do Not Disturb or Quiet Zone signs, post them, and then select a quiet activity.
- Make meal time a family learning event. Have children help plan, prepare meals, set and clear the table (as able),

- Have children help measure and count ingredients.
- Setting the table can be a way to practice math facts, by counting or multiplying items needed.
- Theme of the day. Children can draw paper placemats on paper towels and find a few items to use as a centerpiece.
- Create an evening routine such as an evening walk, a family game, or story time.
- Have one family member select an activity of the day for everyone to join. Each family member will be assigned one day each week when they get to pick an activity.

PUTTING IT IN WRITING.

Setting goals, writing thoughts, and using charts can be a visual way to take control.

- Have all family members write and post a goal for the day. At the end of the day, celebrate the goals achieved. Reflect on and revise goals that were not achieved.
- Create a list of items that bring comfort, reassurance, and support. Help children gather a few of the items and create a comfort zone. A soft blanket or pillow can be added. The comfort zone is a safe place to go to take a break. Remind children to use Think, Feel, Act to help share their thoughts and feelings.
- Daily journal writing. There are many things that children cannot control. However, they do have control over what they write or draw in their own journal. Journaling helps children identify, explore, and express their feelings. They can gain insight into their thoughts and ideas. Journaling should be an opportunity to freely express themselves.
- Plan of action. Older children may benefit from creating a written plan of action.

GOAL FOR THE DAY:

MY COMFORT LIST:

My three favorite toys:

My three favorite books:

My three favorite tv shows:

My three favorite movies:

PLAN OF ACTION:

My plan for school

My plan for exercise

My plan for play

My plan for my feelings

When I feel sad, I will

When I feel frustrated, I will

When I feel stressed, I will
