

# STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

## Children's Mental Health and COVID-19

As we all know, the COVID virus is still with us and is impacting almost every aspect of our lives. As parents, we may feel overwhelmed with simply “surviving” at this time — work, children, relationships, etc. The list may feel endless some days. Our children may be feeling the same way. Here are some simple tips and information that could help you and your children move from “surviving” to “thriving” during the continued pandemic.

### CONSISTENCY IN SCHEDULING

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), a consistent routine can help our children feel safe and secure. Maintaining routines can help with coping with the fear and uncertainty of the unknown that we face each day with COVID. All children would benefit from regular bedtimes and wake times during virtual school days just as if they were “in person” school days. Working for a period, followed by regular breaks and healthy snacks can help the days pass in a predictable day. Remember, in-person school days are broken up by PE, recess, music, art and lunch time. These breaks give the kids a chance to “reboot” and restart their brains for academic learning. Kids doing virtual learning need the same.

### CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY

Children are made to play! Both free play and structured play need to be incorporated into their daily schedule each day. Outside play not only fosters imagination but has many health benefits, as well. Drawing with sidewalk chalk, shooting hoops, playing catch — the list is endless. Parents can also join in. Outside breaks for parents can increase work productivity and mental health, as well! If the weather is not good, get out the board games, coloring books and puzzles.

### TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS

During times of uncertainty and doubt, parents often feel they need to put on a “happy face.” The APA encourages parents to let your children know, in an age-appropriate way, that you are sad or frustrated with the continued issues surrounding COVID. Using “I” statements (I feel sad because we can't visit grandma right now) are a great way to express your feelings. Invite your child



to express himself or herself in the same manner (I feel mad that we didn't get to do field trips this year at school).

### KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Children crave information about things that impact their daily lives. As all parents know the question “why?” gets asked millions of times throughout the day. Children's author, Julia Cook, wrote a book that explains COVID to children. **“The Yucky Bug”** is available on YouTube as a free read aloud. Also available for free is **“Caroline Conquers her Corona Fears.”** a Coronavirus coloring book that explores thoughts and feelings about being stuck at home during COVID, available at [Isuhsc.edu](http://Isuhsc.edu).



### ASK FOR HELP!

We teach our children to ask for help when things get too difficult for them to handle. Parents need to remember that too. The UAB EACC is here to help. Visit our website at [uab.edu/eacc](http://uab.edu/eacc).