

# PANDEMIC PARENTING: SUPPORTING OUR KIDS & OURSELVES

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## TWO GIFTS OF THIS TIME: GREATER RESILIENCE & INCREASED CONNECTION

- Facing uncertainty & sitting with discomfort gives our kids practice in facing challenges.
- Parents can teach and model how to stay flexible and persevere through difficulty.
- The pace of life has slowed for many, providing an opportunity to develop deeper relationships with our children and help us come out of this stronger as a family.

## TOOLS TO HELP US FIND THE GIFTS

### Working with The Brain

- Chronic stress has an impact on our bodies and brains. We may find ourselves in fight or flight more frequently, with decreased concentration, more easily distracted, anxious, depressed or not able to function as we have during less stressful times.
- By taking time to regulate every 30-45 minutes throughout the day, we can lessen the negative effects of stress, and be more available to our children.
- Exercise, deep breaths, stepping outdoors, a hug, playing a game, and meditating are all ways to regulate. Regulation is important for our children too, so we need to model it.

### Using Structure & Routine

- Routines are particularly helpful right now because knowing what to expect helps reduce the mental load on our already stressed brains.
- The most important routines to tend to include: sleep, meals, physical activity, and social connection. Make sure these are in place to help us navigate this time and ensure our children are getting what they need to stay healthy.
- The more we involve kids in creating routines, the more likely they will be to follow them. With teens, we can act as the consultant instead of the boss and help them reflect on what is routine for them and what areas may need additional focus.

### Making Meaning

- Making meaning of this time can help to minimize the long-term impact.
- Doing good for others- in tiny ways such as calling a grandparent to check in, or, in bigger ways supporting community.
- Increasing responsibility in the home gives children a sense that they matter. With the additional time around the home, we have the opportunity to build some great life skills.
- Giving choice and freedom where possible can help children feel empowered in their lives.



### **Supporting Ourselves as Parents**

- These are hard times. We are going to lose it and so are our children. Mistakes are going to happen. Self-compassion allows us to more easily recover from mistakes and try again.
- If we can allow ourselves to not be perfect parents and accept that this time is different, we can let go of the idea that we should be able to manage the same way we did before, and adapt to new ways of being.

### **Remembering Our Most Effective Parenting Tool**

- As our children grow, our job is to slowly release them to their own autonomy.
- Hold on too tight and we may not give them enough space to make mistakes while they are still at home with us. Give too much freedom, and they may not know how to handle it.
- By walking with them through this challenging time, trusting them, showing compassion for their mistakes, and letting them try again, we send the message that what matters most is the connection between us.
- Your most powerful parenting tool as your child grows is in your relationship with them. When they are teens, it's the trust and connection that allows us to have influence.
- We can take this time as an opportunity to build that connection in deeper ways.

### **RESOURCES**

Dr. Dan Siegel Brain in Hand Model- <https://youtu.be/gm9CIJ74Oxw>

(Demonstrates what happens when we experience big emotions- adults and kids alike)

Talking to kids about racism, social justice, anti-racist book lists- <https://www.embracerace.org/>

Community & Family Resource List- <https://bit.ly/2BB04mn>

Seattle Public Schools Health Services and Resource Page- <https://bit.ly/2AC8sSf>

National Association of School Psychologists Helping Kids Cope- <https://bit.ly/2Y8V00i>

(Note sidebar for information in multiple languages)

