

# Parenting in a Pandemic

An Informational Newsletter from Relate Counseling Center

## 6 SIGNS YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE STRUGGLING WITH COVID-19 STRESS:

- Physical complaints, like stomach aches and head aches
- Preoccupation with germs or excessive hand-washing
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Withdrawing or self-isolating from friends and family
- Changes in behavior, like big outbursts
- Difficulty concentrating on schoolwork

*If you notice any of the above symptoms in your child or teen, don't hesitate to reach out for help. Contact Relate Counseling Center at 952-932-7277 to schedule an appointment with a Relate therapist today.*



## How to Boost Your Family's Mental Health During the Upcoming Holiday Season

**By Vivienne Lorijn, MSW, LGSW  
Relate Counseling Center Therapist**

The winter holidays can be lovely, ushering in images of cheerful friends ice skating, families sitting by cozy fires, and festive gatherings with loved ones. For many, however, this season is tough and can easily stir up feelings of heightened anxiety, loneliness, grief and loss. And in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are constantly left worrying about our health and that of our loved ones, all the while reflecting back on a year of difficult trials, financial insecurities and unrealized plans for the future.

It is therefore all the more important to prioritize your mental health. While there is joy in this season, allow yourself to feel what you feel, and do what you can to take care of yourself. The "4Cs" below encompass ideas supporting emotional wellbeing to help you and your loved ones through this month.

**Connect:** Give yourself permission to feel your emotions as they are. Make room for grief if you are missing someone who has passed. It is ok not to feel cheerful. If feelings of loneliness or isolation become too overwhelming, reach out to your support system (friends, family, religious or other online community events) and ask for help. If despite these efforts persistent feelings of sadness or anxiety continue, talk to a mental health professional. You are not alone!

**Care:** Set some time aside for yourself to engage in an activity you enjoy or simply practice some easy deep-breathing exercises. Make sure to get enough sunlight and vitamin D. Going for a daily walk outside will improve your nervous system. Research continues to show a strong connection between taking Vitamin D supplements and spending time in nature, and reduced levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

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# Parenting Resource Corner:



**Podcast recommendation:** Looking for tips on how to help your kiddos deal with COVID-19 stress and isolation? [Check out this 21-minute segment from NPR.](#)



**For your kids:** Send them [this cartoon guide \(and printable Zine\)](#) on how to deal with COVID stressors.



**Virtual holiday guide:** Want to make the holidays memorable for your kids, even though social distancing has your plans looking different this year? [Check out this fun list of virtual holiday gathering activities.](#)



**Feeling overwhelmed with parenting demands?** [Read this article for tips on how to manage your perspective and stay level-headed.](#)

## Stay Connected with Relate:

Check our website and social media pages for up-to-date information on parenting groups and resources.



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# Winter Holiday Tips (continued)

**COPE:** Reflect on what you are grateful for and jot at least 3 of them down, or let someone know why you are grateful for them. Practicing gratitude can change your perspective and help you see that even in difficult times there is always something good in life. Also, setting clear boundaries with others and with yourself in regards to your spending budget can help you focus your energy so you won't feel so overwhelmed. Take some time to consider what gives you and your loved ones still meaning and fulfillment during this time.

**Collaborate:** Find a volunteer opportunity, donate to your favorite charity, or seek a way to help a neighbor in need may be another way to decrease a sense of hopelessness and stress. Being altruistic and focusing on others increases your oxytocin levels (your "happiness hormones") and thus automatically alleviates some stress and helps you see life in a more positive light. These are unusual and stressful times that come with many global uncertainties, national contradictions and personal health risks (mentally and physically). Taking good care of yourself, especially during the holiday season, is a must. While it might not be an easy task, remind yourself that with enough intention and patience this too shall pass and eventually be overcome.

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