

STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR CAREGIVERS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK



Many things about our daily lives have changed with COVID-19. You may be trying to adjust to supporting your child's remote learning while working from home. Some of you are essential workers trying to manage working outside the home. This time may be even more stressful if your child is not receiving services yet or in the way your child is used to receiving them. While some stress is inevitable, it can be helpful to identify the stressors in our lives and learn how to manage their impact. Below we offer some ideas for relieving stress. These tips may require creative thinking as we are limited to the space of our homes during NYS on PAUSE. But creativity has no limits!

- **Embrace positive thinking.** Having a positive mindset during stressful moments can help you cope. Positive self-talk during tough moments can help you get through them with a clearer mind. For example, instead of negative self-talk like, "This is too difficult" or "I've never done this before," you can use positive language. For example, "This is difficult, but I know I can do this. It's an opportunity to learn something new." Overall, when you practice positive thinking, you're better able to handle everyday stressors with more resilience.
- **Create family routines.** Family routines can increase feelings of security and safety, especially for your children and allow for a more productive day for the entire family. But this can take time, so focus on developing one new routine/habit at a time.
- **Take care of yourself.** It is important for you and generally best for your family, that you take personal time for yourself. This time can be used to decompress so you can return to your work and family feeling calmer. Taking care of yourself includes getting rest, eating well, and carving out time for physical activity.
- **Play.** Find stress free activities to do with your child. You can do an activity with little equipment or effort--something you both genuinely enjoy doing. If you don't have a hobby, you can develop a new hobby together.
- **Do one thing at a time.** Often, we try to multitask, doing too many tasks all at once, in hopes we will complete the tasks sooner. This can lead to mistakes and more unnecessary stress. Slow down. Try to focus on one thing at a time.
- **Enjoy journal writing.** Use a notebook or even a journal app on your phone to write how you feel. This can allow you to get in touch with your feelings and confront your worries. Set aside 10 minutes to write daily.
- **Connect with fellow parents and caregivers.** Reach out to your circle of support. Expressing your emotions with a loved one and/or a fellow parent/caregiver may help you cope with stress. No matter what, you are not alone. You also can refer to NYC Well, which provides free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health, and substance misuse support, information, and referral. You can reach their toll-free helpline 24/7 by phone, text, and online chat. Mental health professionals there can connect you to the services you need.