

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SCHOOL IS CANCELED. NOW WHAT?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) concerns are growing, and school closures are happening in most states. While grown-ups are anxiously figuring out how to handle the impacts of these decisions, kids are observing everything and may feel just as scared and confused as adults.

Talking with children about COVID-19

Children look to parents, guardians, caregivers and other trusted adults to help them make sense of what is happening in the world. COVID-19 is the topic of conversations everywhere on social media, web news outlets and TV. Everyone is being exposed to the fear and uncertainty of this global pandemic.

Children might find it difficult to understand what they are seeing or hearing about COVID-19, so they can be particularly vulnerable to feelings of anxiety, stress and sadness. As an adult, it's important to make yourself available to listen to children's thoughts and communicate in an age-appropriate way that addresses children's questions without stoking anxiety. Children react, in part, to what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a stressful situation calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides [Tips for Caregivers, Parents and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#) that includes information on possible reactions and tips for talking with children and youth of different age groups.

Tips for staying at home with children during the outbreak

- **Focus on the uniqueness of the moment.** This situation has never happened before. How can you make the best of it? Yes, it is stressful on many levels, but for your children, it is a time they will never forget and there is an opportunity in forced togetherness to reinforce your family bonds.

- **Plan for different age groups.** Younger children will love being home. Young teenagers may not be as thrilled by not being able to hang out with their friends on a daily basis. High schoolers can handle themselves and may be able to help with the younger kids if you have to work.
- **Bend with the wind.** Meaning: be flexible with the schedule. Let children play, do a fun project together (make cookies or do a craft), eat breakfast for lunch and make room for downtime to read and hang out. Your kids may have quite a bit of time at home, so try to maintain your patience and perspective.

EAP is here to provide you with compassionate and caring support.
Go online to eap.calhr.ca.gov or call 1-866-327-4762 to get started.



Adapted from: Stockwell, A. (2020, March 13). What to do with your kids when schools are canceled. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2020/3/13/21178234/coronavirus-covid-19-school-closures-kids-home>