

FEELING OFF BALANCE



We're facing new stresses and unfamiliar worries during these days of pandemic and social distancing. Businesses send workers home, schools close for unknown periods of time, and we're being instructed to "shelter in place." The uncertainty of times like these can lead to lots of different and complicated feelings for adults, kids, and teens. There are a number of reasons for this:

DISRUPTION OF EVERYDAY ROUTINES

Even though routines can feel burdensome at times, there's a comfort we can find in the daily rhythms of life. We've all developed strategies for finding a balance between going to work or school, managing homework and extra-curricular activities, and finding times to relax and play.

During this time, many of our routines have been put to the side for a while, causing days to run together without any of the habits we rely on to provide structure, stability and predictability.

EVERYONE UNDER THE SAME ROOF

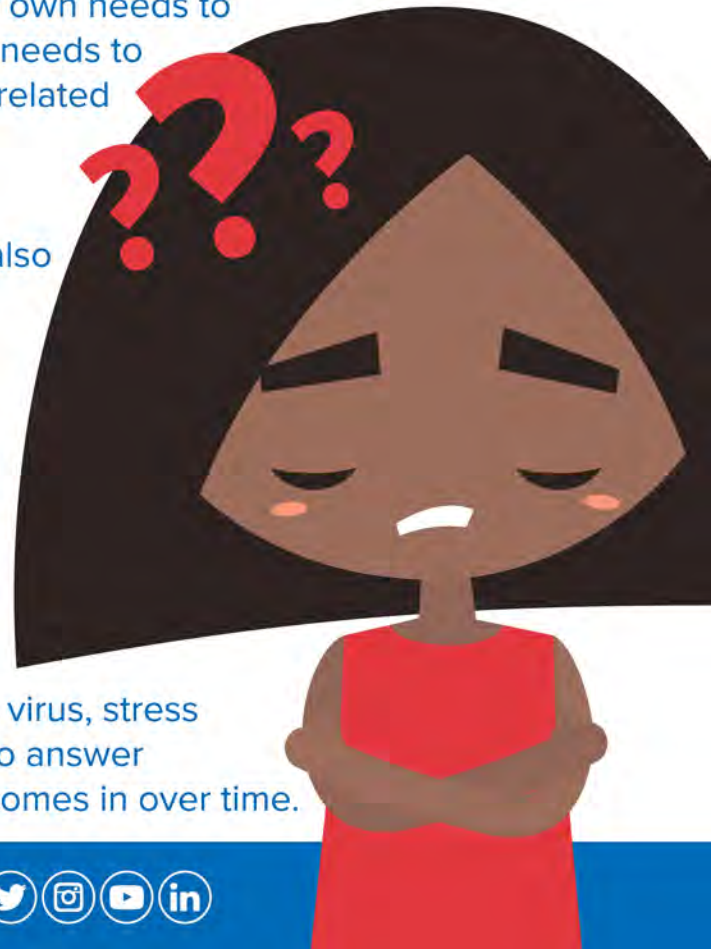
Along with the disruption of routines, we're all spending much more time at home than we typically do. We may be having to juggle between our own needs to continue our work from our homes and our children's needs to be supported as they transition to completing school-related tasks online from home.

On top of that, there's the simple fact of all crowding together day after day in the same space, which can also add to stress.

FAMILY MEMBERS WORKING ON THE FRONT LINES

Not all family members are able to shelter in place, due to their roles in providing the necessary services that we all rely on to keep life running during difficult times – health care, food, public safety, deliveries, mail, and others. This can cause stress to the person going out to work and also to those staying at home.

Beyond the stress of potentially being exposed to the virus, stress can also build up with our questions that are difficult to answer because of the constantly changing information that comes in over time.



UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE

It is natural to wonder how long unusual times will last and what life will be like afterwards. Many families are facing uncertainty about employment, finances, childcare, or other aspects of life that weren't previously a source of concern. It can be hard for adults to manage these worries, and children may sense the strain even when these anxieties are not discussed directly with them.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO MANAGE THESE CHALLENGES?

In the words of Fred Rogers, *"Anything that is human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable."*

Allowing ourselves as adults to acknowledge the complex feelings we may be having, and sharing our feelings with other adults, will help our feelings become more manageable. This can also prepare us to support our children as they struggle with their own feelings.

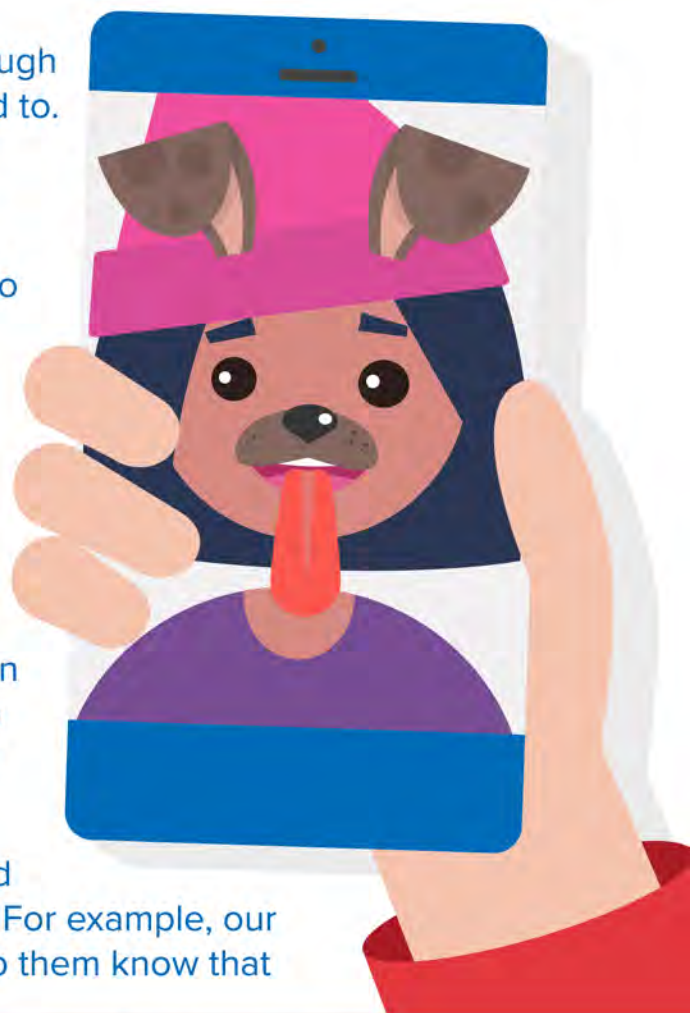
One way to help manage our anxieties is by harnessing technology to stay connected to important and supportive people in our lives. For example, we might have coffee "together" using Zoom or Skype. Other online resources and supports are available for us to learn how others are managing similar situations.

If we're able, we can try to keep our focus in the present, acknowledging that there are some true unknowns in the future but choosing to bring our attention to what is close at hand and within our control.

Schedules and structures can be helpful in getting through days that may look quite different from what we're used to. Consider creating a daily schedule that allows time for work, school work, snacks, meals, as well as rest and relaxation. Remember that while structure is important, making space for flexibility allows us to be responsive to our children's needs. They may be feeling anxious or unsettled, or may be carrying questions that it would help them to discuss.

Some of the questions our children have may be difficult or even impossible to answer. However, just being able to say them out loud to a trusted adult can make those questions feel more bearable, and is often more important than receiving a definite answer. We can reassure our children that we're doing our best to keep ourselves safe and healthy, and to keep them safe and healthy as well.

Allow them to express any feelings they are having, and help them distinguish between feelings and behaviors. For example, our children may be feeling confused or angry. We can help them know that



while having feelings like these is a normal part of living through unusual times, it is important to find ways of responding or expressing these feelings in behaviors that allow for release while being safe for themselves and others. Punching or shouting into a pillow is a way of helping to discharge feelings of anger without harming anyone in the process.

Check out the resources available on our social media platforms for additional support and guidance for you and your family. Remember that we are all in this together and that you are not alone.

