

Parenting in a Crisis (COVID-19)
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When times are difficult it can put a strain on the parent-child relationship. Reminding ourselves (1) how our children relate to us and the world around them, (2) how children respond to trauma, and (3) how they can grow in a difficult season, can help us as parents navigate our responsibilities and still see our children thrive under our care.

“Parenting in a Crisis” was put together to assist parents during their shelter shut-ins, aka quarantine, during the Corona Virus Pandemic in the United States. This worksheet is a resource to act as reminder of our FB/IG LIVE time together. Please download and share this with those you would like to encourage.

AGES & STAGES

How children relate to their guardian and the world around them

AGES & STAGES	The child is...	The parent is...	Influences in this stage...
2s and 3s	Learning the world doesn't revolve around them (anymore).	Teaching the child to share, helping them have patience while waiting for a snack, etc.	The parent
Kindergarden (4-7)	Developing their own opinions and interests in friendships, games, preferences in food, and activities, etc. They have “their own” life and schedule now.	Learning to parent in a way that builds their child's character, instead of parenting in a way that is convenient and works around the parent's lifestyle, career, etc.	The child
4th Grade (8+)	Beginning to understand concepts and not take everything literally.	Helping the child process and develop problem solving skills, creative thinking and critical thinking skills.	Outside influences (that are out of our control)

Understanding what stage our child is in can help us communicate to our children when things are stressful.

TRAUMA

How children respond to trauma

FOUR PHASES OF TRAUMA	My paraphrase of that phase
Impact	Something happened
Withdrawal/Confusion	Asking “What just happened?”

FOUR PHASES OF TRAUMA	My paraphrase of that phase
Adjustment	Processing what happened
Reconstruction/Rebuilding	Building from what happened

When children experience trauma they usually fall into one of two groups:

Group One	Group Two
Child experiences impact.	Child experiences impact.
Child has no previous experience to draw from therefore is unable to come to the conclusion that "everything is going to be okay."	Child begins to evaluate and process what happened. Still to due limited vocabulary and experience they are unable to resolve the issue and know everything is going to be okay.
Experiences high levels of anxiety.	Experiences confusion, may verbally process.

When children experience trauma they learn four things:

1. The world is not safe.
2. The world is not kind.
3. The world is unpredictable.
4. The world is not trustworthy.

When we are experiencing impact, after impact, after impact, we may struggle to adjust and then in turn help our children adjust and rebuild in difficult situations. When we are overwhelmed and stressed it can be difficult to think clearly.

When we are experiencing crisis in our personal lives due to something like COVID-19 and how it is effecting our local communities (shutting down schools, no longer able to see our friends, move church experiences online, etc.) what should we do for our kids?

1. Go easy on ourselves
2. Go easy on our kids

HOW TO TAKE IT EASY

How do we go easy on ourselves when we have many responsibilities and are experiencing impact and withdrawal? We can take it easy during hard times by planning ahead.

Currently, while working from home, trying to find childcare or to find a job, with limited resources, here are three areas we can think through and plan for:

(1) PLAN ANCHORS

When big things are changing, what little things can keep us balanced throughout the day?

Anchor Ideas for Adults	Anchor Ideas for Kids
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Morning Coffee	Give statements instead of “Yes or No” questions
Devotions/Meditations	Give mercy, compassion, love, and help instead of tough love. This unique situation will be tough enough, adding “tough love” could add unnecessary stress to our children and strain our relationship with them. Ex: When a child falls a parent may say “walk it off” or “you shouldn’t have been running in the house” instead give them a hug and ask them if they are okay.
Connecting with spouse and family before working virtually and connecting with coworkers	Bedtime routine: Let the child know you are proud of them. Help them open up and then listen for cues that tell you how they are doing internally. Listen with being in a rush.
Make lunches at night (like when kids went to school) so the parent can keep working through lunch instead of interrupting a project to go make lunch	Play with them. Kids say “I am stressed” by saying “Will you play with me?”
Going to bed early	Reset buttons: nap times, quiet times, bath times, etc.
Getting ready for the day (shower, hair, make up, wearing jeans instead of sweats, etc.)	Let them wake up naturally, instead of using an alarm, this helps their disposition.
Don’t discipline when angry or scared	Get on one knee and give them a big hug at their level.

(2) PLAN FOR EMOTIONS TO RUN HIGH

When you, as the parent, are losing your cool, what can you do? Here are some ideas.

Parent time-out
Sit in the car to cry or make a phone call, keeping the kids in the house with an adult or older sibling to keep them out of danger.
Take a nap
Eliminate any social media the parent consumes
Use incentive for the parents who need one
Eat healthy
Keep moving! Go for a walk outside.
Walk away from the issue! Address it when your emotions have settled down.
Call a family member, counselor, pastor or your child’s teacher/coach. Ask for help, can they talk with your child or watch them (keeping social distancing practices) so that you can have some quiet time.

Google “Department of Human Resources” for your state to find help with food, childcare and other support in your community.

(3) PLAN FOR COVID-19

What will you do when someone in your home gets sick with the corona virus?

What is your primary care provider’s phone number?

What does at home care look like for your family?

What room will the person who gets sick stay in?

Who will care for that individual?

In extreme conditions, what does hospitalized care look like?

Who would be home with the other family members?

Who helps with virtual school for children online?

Who helps with food?

Who stays with the individual at the hospital?

One way to go easy on ourselves in difficult seasons is to plan ahead. This way, when we are confused and processing we have steps that we can take to help us rebuild from what happened.

Remember: to trust yourself. You are smart enough to learn and discover how to care for your children. Your child might have been a surprise, but they are not an accident. You are not an accidental parent.

Yes, this is hard. Still, I believe your family can come out of this season stronger and closer than ever.

People who thrive in crisis do so because someone was sacrificial. As a Christian, I believe that my sin put me in a state of crisis but because of Jesus Christ, and his sacrifice on the cross, I can experience abundant life. (John 3:16 and John 10:10, NKJV)

You can do the same, receive strength from the Lord, and give time and attention to these little ones and you will see them grow during this disorienting season. You can parent well in a crisis!

*Sources:

1. “Trauma, How children respond to trauma” taken from *The Complete Guide to Trauma and Crisis Counseling: What to Do and Say When It Matters Most!* Ch. 8, 16, 17.
2. “Ages & Stages” and “How to take it easy” comes from Stephanie A. Anderson’s personal observations from caring for and serving families for over 20 years.