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Protecting Your Family

Rita Fleming

Tennessee State University

Kane Reeves

Tennessee State University

Beatrice Harris

Tennessee State University

Margaret Machara

Tennessee State University

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COPING WITH COVID-19

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY'S MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Rita Fleming, M.S., Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist
Contact: 615-593-4585, rfleming2@tnstate.edu

Kane Reeves, Ed.D., Extension Agent & County Director
Beatrice Harris, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Extension Specialist
Margaret Machara, Ph.D., CFLE, Professor, Department of Human Sciences

This is an unprecedented time for all of us. Take these steps to help yourself and your kids cope.

Mental Health professionals over the last couple of weeks are hearing concerns about the impact the coronavirus pandemic is having on caregivers' emotional health and their children's mental well-being.

Fortunately, there are some steps you can take to protect your family's mental health during this very difficult time.

MAKE SOCIAL DISTANCING AND SELF-QUARANTINING MANAGEABLE

For all of us, social distancing is a temporary fact of life. Even many businesses and school have closed. For



many, mandatory quarantine will be inevitable. These are the two chief concerns causing people stress and

worry. There are five steps (instead of stockpiling toilet paper) that will make it much easier to cope.

1. Resist the urge to treat this time as a vacation.

Wake up each morning at a regular time. Make sure your kids are awake at the same time each morning as well. Act as if it was a school and workday. Keep a regular bedtime routine as well. This will help both adults and kids feel some normalcy within the disruption and will also make it much easier to transition back to regular life.

2. Create a schedule for yourself and your children for each day

If they need to do schoolwork online, or work sent home by teachers, set aside the same time each day for children to do their homework without distractions. This will be easier with middle and high schoolers

because many schools are conducting distance learning.

For younger children, it's up to parents to structure learning time during the day

3. Your family's schedule should include physical activity.

Social isolation can trigger sad feelings and even depression. Exercise is scientifically known to combat these feelings, so use in-home equipment and find workouts online.

If you are not quarantined, take regular walks or bike rides, especially with children.

4. Limit family's exposure to news

It can be tempting to watch 24-hour news during this time. However, it is emotionally healthier to resist the urge to spend many hours watching the news. This can increase anxiety in kids and adults.

5. Use technology for social interaction.

Don't retreat from social interaction – regular phone and video chatting with close

friends and family is important for mental health. Even young children can and should video chat with grandparents, friends and cousins.



RELY ON OFFICIAL HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS

It can be immobilizing and painful to have to reconsider attending significant social engagements. While this can still be incredibly sad, it is easier to rely on the advice of health officials to guide your decision.

KNOW ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION COULD GET WORSE

The risk for depression is particularly high for teens and young adults, especially when they feel isolated from their friends. If you believe you have a child who is at risk for depression, keep a close eye on them and seek help if necessary.

For General Health Information: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

TN COVID-19 Information: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>

TN Mental Health Hotline: 1-855-274-7471

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