

# The Impact of the Covid19 Pandemic on Children and Families: Practical Strategies for Caregivers

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# Today's agenda

- ▶ Briefly cover impact of the pandemic on mental health services for children and families
- ▶ Adjusting expectations
- ▶ Practical strategies for caregivers
  - ▶ Routine
  - ▶ Structure
  - ▶ Feelings
  - ▶ Coping Skills
  - ▶ Narrative
  - ▶ Learning social distancing behaviors
  - ▶ Back to school prep
  - ▶ Social skills

\*any online resources mentioned in this webinar will be listed with links before the questions slide

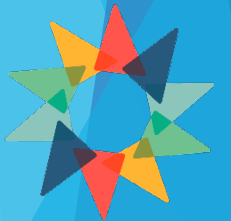
# Impact on Mental Health Services

## For providers

- ▶ Providers adjusting & learning as we go
- ▶ Limits based on state, county, city, and/or agency
- ▶ Supervision & support system for providers has changed

## For children & families

- ▶ Children's ability to participate on telehealth is limited due to development
- ▶ Other services the child needs may not be occurring, impacting mental health
  - ▶ For example: speech therapy



# Adjust Your Expectations

## For your child:

- ▶ Increased irritability
- ▶ Lower frustration tolerance
- ▶ Feeling lethargic or displaying withdrawal
- ▶ Maintain limits but be understanding

## For yourself:

- ▶ Increased irritability
- ▶ Lower frustration tolerance
- ▶ Multiple roles
  - ▶ E.g. working at home while parenting
- ▶ Caregivers may be feeling guilt for not being able to “do it all”
  - ▶ Cut yourself some slack!!



# Routine

- ▶ Why routines are important
  - ▶ Helps “settle” your brain’s stress system
  - ▶ Creates a sense of control
  - ▶ Helps kids channel their energy and focus
- ▶ How to create a routine
  - ▶ The order of activities is up to you
  - ▶ Be mindful of where you want your child’s energy level throughout the day
    - ▶ Example: High energy activity right before nap usually results in difficulty “winding down” to sleep




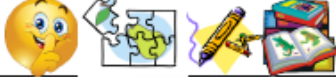











# Types of activities to include:

- Movement
  - Dance, yoga, Zumba
- Physical play
  - Outdoor time, sports
- Quiet play
  - Puzzles, books
- Music
  - Listen to music
    - Kid friendly YouTube playlists
  - Make music
- Toy play
  - Variety of toys, use a toy rotation
- Art/creative play
  - Coloring, chalk, beads, clay, paint
- Learning activities
  - Flash cards, tracing shapes/letters
  - School work
- Tasks/chores
  - Cleaning, putting away laundry

# Creating a Routine Chart

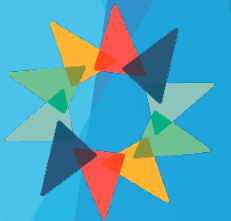
- Use pictures for children who cannot read
- Make one using tables in Microsoft Word and clipart
- Be creative and make one together!
  - Draw the pictures for each item
- Can include changeable pieces
- Hang the chart somewhere your child can see it daily and reference it

## My Day

<b>Eat Breakfast</b>	
<b>Quiet Play</b>	
<b>Learning Activity</b>	
<b>Music</b>	
<b>Physical Play</b>	
<b>Movement Activity</b>	
<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Rest/TV Time</b>	
<b>Quiet Play</b>	
<b>Child Led Play</b>	
<b>Physical Play</b>	
<b>Movement Activity</b>	
<b>Dinner</b>	

# Structure

- ▶ Not just about routine!
- ▶ Having structure for your child also includes:
  - ▶ Maintaining limits
  - ▶ Having expectations
  - ▶ Consistency from caregivers
- ▶ Although kids and teens often act like they dislike these elements of structure and are generally pleased when we relax or eliminate them, they still benefit from having the structure and tend to function better within the structure





# Feelings

## ▶ Label feelings

- ▶ Point out what you see your child feeling
  - ▶ Allow them to correct you, even if they're being silly
- ▶ Point out what you are feeling
  - ▶ Kids learn so much through modeling by adults
- ▶ Point out the feelings of characters in books, TV, and movies
  - ▶ Objectively thinking about character's feelings is easier

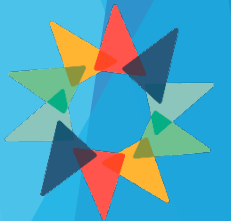
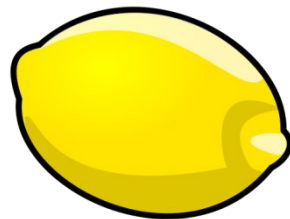
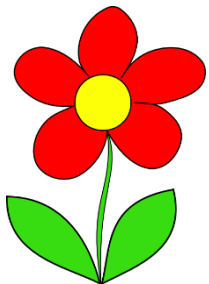
## ▶ Dealing with feelings

- ▶ Guide your child through expressing and coping with their feelings
  - ▶ When we have “mad” or “worry” in our bodies it has to get out in some way
- ▶ Model how you express and cope with your feelings in a productive way
  - ▶ Example: “I’m feeling frustrated with my work right now, I am going to go outside and play soccer with you for a few minutes to get out some energy”



# Coping Skills

- ▶ Make them fun
- ▶ Practice during play
  - ▶ Goal is to create habits
- ▶ Integrate into routine
  - ▶ Preventative
  - ▶ Make it a family activity
- ▶ Have a variety of 'tools' in your 'toolbox'
  - ▶ There may be times when you cannot use your 'go to' skill



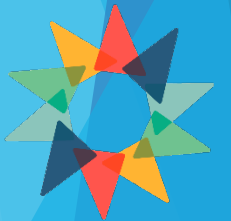
# Narrative

- ▶ Presents information in story format
- ▶ Helps a child look at a situation objectively through a character
- ▶ Many about Covid19 already exist
  - ▶ Sesame Street has some on their website
- ▶ Easy to make your own
  - ▶ Write or type up the words
  - ▶ Draw or use clipart to add pictures
- ▶ Include:
  - ▶ Information about the event/topic that is developmentally appropriate
  - ▶ Feelings the character may experience in that situation
  - ▶ Coping skills and appropriate ways to respond to the feelings
  - ▶ What a change will look like
  - ▶ Positive messages



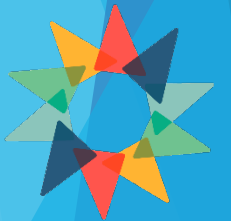
# Learning Social Distancing Behaviors

- ▶ Practice at home
  - ▶ Act out what will happen in the setting your child will be in
- ▶ Model safe health behaviors for your child
  - ▶ Do the behaviors your child needs to learn
- ▶ Sesame Street's website has videos and stories that show kids how to wash hands, wear masks, having socially distanced play dates, etc.
- ▶ Understand expectations for impulse control and self-monitoring in young kids
- ▶ Praise your child's attempts and successes



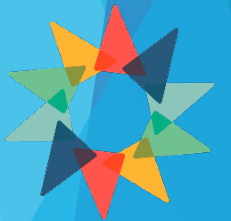
# Back to School Preparation

- ▶ In-person instruction
  - ▶ Let kids know what will change and what will be the same
  - ▶ Ask your child's school for information about how their school and classroom will be functioning
  - ▶ Talk to your child ahead of time about what will happen during their day and why measures are in place (e.g. why they cannot hug their friend or share snacks)
- ▶ Virtual learning
  - ▶ Create a routine at home for the school day
    - ▶ Use a clock and/or timer to create structure around time spent on each part of routine
    - ▶ Schedule breaks
  - ▶ Participate in video calls if offered
  - ▶ Create a designated school space



# Social Skills

- ▶ Use books, movies, and TV to talk about social skills
  - ▶ After reading or watching:
    - ▶ talk with your child about what happened in the plot
    - ▶ how the characters dealt with it
    - ▶ whether that response was helpful or unhelpful
    - ▶ ask whether your child has ever experienced something like that
- ▶ Set up social interactions for your child if comfortable
  - ▶ Video calls
  - ▶ Outdoor play dates
  - ▶ Send mail
- ▶ Join activities in the community
  - ▶ When safe and appropriate



# Resources mentioned in this presentation:

- ▶ Free videos for mindfulness exercises, meditations, yoga, and movement for preschool and elementary age children (although they're fun for all ages!)
  - ▶ <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
- ▶ A book about feelings: In My Heart read aloud
  - ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlfLgHBwYx4&list=WL&index=85&t=1s>
- ▶ Breathe, Think, Do! App by Sesame Street for deep breathing and problem solving:
  - ▶ [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.sesameworkshop.ResilienceThinkBreatheDo&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.sesameworkshop.ResilienceThinkBreatheDo&hl=en_US)
- ▶ Sesame street videos, stories, and activities about a range of topics including Covid19 & social distancing behavior
  - ▶ <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/>
- ▶ A New York Times article about Social Skills impact on young kids
  - ▶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/parenting/kids-social-needs-quarantine.html>



# Questions?

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