Caregiver Self-Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
Jessica Zweifach, PhD
Pilar Trelles, MD

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Agenda

• Introductions
  • Pilar Trelles, MD
  • Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
  • Jessica Zweifach, PhD
• Parent Self-Care: The Basics
• Parent Self-Care: Cognitive Strategies
• Parent Self-Care: Behavioral Strategies
• Question and Answer
Caregiver Self-Care: The Basics

- Why should we make this a focus?
Caregiver Self-Care: The Basics

Physical Health
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Medical health

Emotional Health
- Stay connected
- Spirituality
- Find internal space for yourself
Caregiver Self-Care: Cognitive Strategies

• Validate and label your own emotions
  • Ex: I am feeling overwhelmed right now and that is okay.

• Shift expectations with regards to school work for your children, your job, household chores

• Be flexible
  • If the morning work is not going well it is okay to go for a walk and reset
  • If a schedule is not working, change it
Caregiver Self-Care: Cognitive Restructuring

- **Reframe situations**
  - Raising your voice
  - A lesson on emotion regulation and apologizing

- **Be Kind To Yourself**
  - “What would I say to my closest friend if they were in this specific situation?”

- **Challenge unhelpful thoughts**
  - “I should be able to get through all of assignments my child’s teacher gave us”  
    “I am doing the best that I can to help my child complete his assignments while managing other responsibilities. There will be other days to catch up if not I can always email me child’s teacher for suggestions.”

- **Utilize self talk to help you through stressful situations**
Caregiver Self-Care: Behavioral Strategies

• Behavioral Activation: plan one pleasurable activity daily
  • e.g. music, a bath, engage in a hobby

• Affirmations – post a phrase that motivates you
  • Today is a new day; I am strong and capable

• Cut out one activity a day or week that you wouldn’t miss

• Support child’s independence in activities
  • 5 minutes of special time and then transition away
  • Allow for more screen time or other highly motivating activities

• Schedule time for a social outlet: phone, zoom
  • Try to engage even if you do not feel like it in the moment
Caregiver Self-Care: Behavioral Strategies

- Consider limiting COVID-19 content
- Mediation, deep breathing, imagery
- Mandala – perhaps while your child engages in art
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - Tense and release muscles throughout body
- Other physical activity
  - Take walk, engage in stretching or a yoga video
- Gratitude jar or conversation with your family to end the day
- Seek outside support / therapy if needed
Questions & Answers

• Thank you for your attention and participation!
• Please write questions into chat feature and let us know of additional topics you would like covered
• For copies of slides, please email: audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu or bari.britvan@mssm.edu
Resources

General Mental Health Resources:

NYC Well: NYC Well is your connection to free, confidential mental health support. Speak to a counselor via phone, text, or chat and get access to mental health and substance use services, in more than 200 languages, 24/7/365. Text: Text "WELL" to 65173 (message & data rates may apply when using the SMS service)
Call: 1-888-NYC-WELL or visit their https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/

All Mental Health: https://coronavirus.allmentalhealth.org/ A free website with coping and communication skills specific to COVID-19

Anxiety and Depression Association of America https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources has resources to manage COVID-19 related anxiety


Mental Health America (MHA), Mental Health and COVID-19- Information and Resources https://mhanational.org/covid19
Resources

Sleep Hygiene:


Free Exercise Classes:


Parade, 125 + Free Streaming Workouts To Do From Home During Coronavirus https://parade.com/1011717/jessicasager/best-free-workouts/
Resources

Relaxation Resources:

**Head Space** is currently offering free meditations, sleep, and movement exercises [https://www.headspace.com/covid-19](https://www.headspace.com/covid-19)

**Insight Timer** has a library of 30,000 guided meditation exercises [https://insighttimer.com/](https://insighttimer.com/)

**UCLA Mindful app** is always free and utilizes a research-based approach [https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/ucla-mindful-app](https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/ucla-mindful-app)

**Calm** has cultivated a series of free relaxation tools called Take a Deep Breath [https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath](https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath)