

VIRGINIA

INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST

NETWORK



Steps to Help Decrease Stress During the Pandemic

During this pandemic, many of us are feeling stressed and maybe even hopeless and helpless. Uncertainty and lack of control can create feelings of stress, anxiety and fear. In new, stressful situations, it can be helpful to use skills and strengths we already possess to help adjust to the current demands as well as acquire new ones, if needed. We do not know how long the pandemic will last, but we can make small changes to build our resilience. We can focus on the areas in which we can control such as:

- **Environment-** Environments play a major role in physical safety and creating social emotional wellness. Despite the new challenges the pandemic has created, look for ways to personalize the space you are using or add new elements to make it more inviting and relaxing. Declutter, rearrange or even paint to give the area new meaning. When we are present, positive, motivated, and caring, we are more equipped to provide young children with the responsive and nurturing care they deserve.
- **Routines-** In young children, structure and routines reinforce order and predictability while eliminating the stress of uncertainty. When children know what to expect, it minimizes fear and stress and helps reduce challenging behaviors. We are calmer when there are fewer challenging behaviors. Routines provide us with more control, accountability, partnership and continuity of care. Create daily routines to benefit home life and mental wellness.
- **Knowledge-** Minimize the amount of time and frequency spent on researching the virus and related content. Choose to use only credible sources for information and updated policy changes. Commit to not watching the news right before going to bed so that sleep is more restful. For every minute we watch the news, commit to doing something positive to maintain a healthy outlook on life.
- **Resources-** When we share resources, volunteer or offer a kind gesture, we gain a sense of purpose, control and value. Work to maintain relationships with family, friends and co-workers by offering them time, comfort and support. Seek professional mental help, if needed.
- **Mental wellness-** We may not be able to control what happens in the world, but we

can choose our thoughts and behaviors. Choose to focus on the positive and not the problems. When life hands us lemons, we have a choice to become better or become bitter. There is only one letter difference between the words “better” and “bitter.” The choice is ours. The road may be difficult but small, daily steps can change perspective and build resilience. Make it a challenge to find seven unique things we are grateful for each day. This helps us experience the cup as half full instead of the cup as half empty.

- **Personal care-** We can impact our mental wellness and immune system through proper self-care. Choose to eat healthy, take deep breaths, enjoy a bubble bath and exercise. Set aside time daily to do something for ourselves, no matter how small the act. Find constructive ways to express emotions. For creative outlets, try a new craft or art form. For solitary outlets, try journaling or reading. For active outlets, try a different exercise routine or participate in a new exercise challenge. For social outlets, try virtual game night or scavenger hunt with family or friends.

The small steps we make today can have lasting deep impact upon our emotions and mental well-being. It is never too late to start building our resilience!



Resource Spotlight:

Click on the links below to access resources about dealing with COVID-19.

- **Coronavirus Resources for Early Childhood Professionals**
- **Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19**
- **VDSS COVID-19 Response**
- **Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network**

Upcoming PD Opportunities

[Visit us](#) for information on upcoming webinars.

Select Audio Conference & Webinar
under the Training & Professional
Development Tab.

All webinars begin at 1:00pm. Dates are listed below:

- July 9, 2020
- August 13, 2020
- September 10, 2020
- October 8, 2020
- November 19, 2020
- December 10, 2020
- January 14, 2021
- February 11, 2021
- March 11, 2021
- April 15, 2021
- May 13, 2021
- June 10, 2021



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VA ITSN is recruiting programs for the 2020-2021 year. Contact your regional specialist or consultant, if you are interested. Professional development and technical assistance also continues to be offered. [Visit our website](#) for more information.



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