

**How can we reduce stress and help kids thrive during COVID?** Suicide, depression and drug abuse by youth can increase during stressful times. Most child abuse happens when adults reach their breaking point. However, there is a lot that we can do. **Here are 10 suggestions to help kids thrive now:**

1. **Help your kids stay socially connected and physically distant.** Continuing to nurture close relationships with friends and relatives by connecting online or connecting with friends one on one from 6 feet apart outside in your yard, in a park, or on a walk.
2. **Talk with your children.** Like their parents, children may be fearful, or simply missing their routines. Ask them about their concerns. Their answers will guide you on how to talk with them. Reassure them: although this is serious, they and their parents will live through it.
3. **Ask for support,** particularly if you have an infant. Infants exhaust and frustrate their parents. These feelings drive some parents to hurt their infants, making the first six months the most dangerous age for child abuse. If you have a baby in your home, expect these normal feelings. Make a plan now for how to calm down. If your baby won't stop crying, and it's getting to you, put the baby down, and gather yourself. Step outside for some fresh air, call a friend, put on headphones, and wait it out.
4. **Support parents of infants.** Reach out to your friends or relatives with infants at home. Try to listen without offering advice – just listening helps a lot.
5. **Look out for your neighbors.** Offer to help by picking up a food bag at a school or foodbank, getting diapers for families that need them, or cook a meal. Call 211 for help or <https://nhwa.org/COVID-19>
6. **Promote mental health (for parents and kids).** Depression is common and treatable. Those with a history of depression, parents with newborns, and people who have lost their jobs are at particular risk. Recognize common signs of depression: anger and irritability, loss of energy, loss of interest in daily activities, and feeling helpless and hopeless. If you are concerned, reach out to your doctor for help or Crisis Connections is always available 1-866-427-4747. Model self-care and encourage ways to manage stress through exercise, meditation, music, hobbies, art, yoga, or walks with friends/family.
7. **Check in with the children in your life.** Teachers can recognize signs of abuse or neglect. Children who are out of sight because their schools are closed are more vulnerable.
8. **Ensure a safe home.** Family violence may increase due to changes in routines, economic stress, and being together in tight quarters. Reach out to the National Domestic Violence hotline (800-799-7233) for advice. Most victims of gun violence are family members. If there is a gun in your home, be cautious, keep it hidden, unloaded and locked up. Prevent overdose and addiction - keep all alcohol, drugs, tobacco, e-cigarettes, marijuana and medications locked up. Safely dispose of medications at drop box near you <http://www.takebackyourmeds.org>
9. **Engage with your community.** Decision-makers need to hear from all of us about strengthening social safety nets. Look for ways to safely volunteer. Helping others gives us (and older children and teens) a sense of purpose that can help counter stress. Fill out your census form. Vote.
10. **Create positive moments.** Go for walks, play games, do a craft project, cook or bake something together. Learn about family history and culture. Help kids write positive messages with chalk or make signs to post outside your home. Many families are growing closer as we face this crisis together. Look for ways to create happy memories, even now.

