



TO ALL THOSE CARING FOR CHILDREN IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS AND STRESS

During this time of community shutdown and quarantine, we recognize that children can be vulnerable to psychological distress. Children may not yet have the tools and skills to understand or cope with what is happening.

In line with our invitation to support and protect each other during the COVID-19 pandemic, we highly encourage those who are caring for the youth to remain calm, as best as you can, in providing them with a sense of security and safety. Below are guidelines to help children cope through these distressing times:

1. When children ask what is happening, talk in a calm and even tone while explaining the situation. Breathe deep calming breaths before discussing the matter if you need to. Children can sense an adult's tension and anxiety through the adult's verbal and nonverbal language. Thus, it is also important that adults themselves be mindful of their own psychological wellbeing when interacting with children.
2. Acknowledge your children's wonder and curiosity, fear or anxiety. Reflect and ask questions about what they are observing. Soothe their anxiety by acknowledging that it's normal to be anxious. This also means being patient and understanding when they become repetitive or "makulit" about voicing their fears.
3. Relatedly, help them manage their anxiety by teaching them to refocus their attention on what they can do in the moment to help themselves. This may be in form of teaching them how to follow safety protocols such as proper hand-washing, ensuring clean surroundings, and practicing proper and respectful social distancing.
4. Keep to a schedule or routine, as best as you can. This may include having the same mealtimes, study time, and leisure time at home. Even if this is a time of uncertainty, structure can provide a sense of security and certainty for children.
5. Take this opportunity to reconnect and bond with your kids. Engage them with board games, art activities, or sports. Children may also use this time to pick up a hobby or learn crafts via online videos to keep children productive, creative, and engaged. At best, invite them to help with house chores that are light, fun and developmentally appropriate for their age and interest.
6. Make use of technology and digital platforms for children to maintain connections with friends and family in the duration of the month-long community quarantine. Call and say hello to Lolo or Lola, share stories with cousins, or even allow for digital play with friends and family.

As we are now moving towards measures which lead to more time at home, we invite everyone to take this time to nurture and foster positive conversations with each other and grow and evolve as a family!