

Stay at Home Guide

Developed by the Navarro
County Early Childhood
Coalition

For families at home during
the COVID-19 Crisis

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A Message to Parents

First off, we want to let you know--**YOU'RE DOING A GREAT JOB.** No matter what you're doing, this is an unprecedented time. There's no guidebook for getting your family through this situation and only you know what it will take to get your family through this time. Showing up as a parent and being present with your kids everyday IS ENOUGH. We hoped to create this guide as a toolkit for you to pick and choose from what you think will work for your family and to take away your stress- not add to it. We think that the number one thing you can do right now to protect your kids is to **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.**

Please view this as some **friendly advice** from your local counselors, social workers, teachers, and friends to help you and your family connect. We know when we connect with our children, we see the greatest amount of change in their behaviors and in their ability to self-regulate leading to stronger, happier, and healthier adults. In this guide, we will try to give you some resources, ideas, and best practices for staying at home with your child while balancing work, parenting, and educating. We will discuss topics such as relationship building, therapeutic activities, education tools, time management, stress, and include some important information from Trust-Based Relational Intervention, an evidence-based program used by Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services to give parents more tools in their toolbox.

"Parents: what we are being asked to do is not humanly possible. There is a reason we are either a working parent, a stay at home, or a part time working parent. Working, parenting, and teaching are three different jobs that cannot be done at the same time. It's not hard because you are doing it wrong. It's hard because it's too much. Do the best you can. When you have to pick because at some point you will, choose connection. Pick playing a game over arguing about an academic assignment. Pick teaching your child to do laundry rather than feeling frustrated that they aren't helping. Pick laughing, and snuggling, and reminding them they are safe. If you are stressed, lower your expectations where you can virtually reach out for social connection. We are in this together to stay well. That means mentally well, too." --Emily W. King, Ph.D.

Click on any underlined words for links to resources

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Beating Stress and Practicing Mindfulness



Taking care of yourself IS taking care of your children.

We encourage you to practice healthy habits—feed your body well, get enough sleep (6-8 hours for adults), and to take time out specifically to do what it takes to be your best self. We know that when individuals are constantly on edge, experiencing fear or stress, and using their fight, flight, or freeze instincts that that builds up over time and causes a permanent state of panic and stress. We need to help our own bodies self-regulate and stay mindful. We know when families are stressed, their risk for child maltreatment is elevated but when caregivers practice mindfulness and self-care, their risk for maltreatment decreases.

Beating Stress

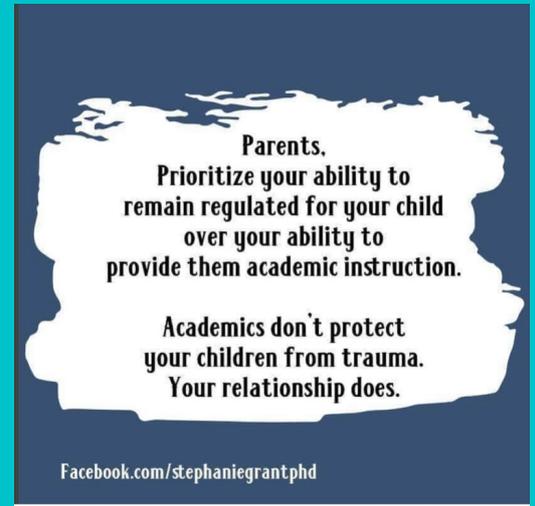
Our friends at [Be Strong Families](#) have put together [100 ways](#) to beat toxic stress. We know you and your family will be experiencing some stress during this time, but prolonged levels of toxic stress can lead to poor health outcomes. Our friends at TBRI talk about the effects of prolonged stress here.

[TBRI and Toxic Stress](#)

[Daily mindfulness questions](#) to guide you through quarantine and social (physical) distancing:

- Who am I checking in with and connecting with today?
- What expectations of “normal” am I letting go of today?
- How am I getting outside today?
- How am I moving my body today?
- How am I expressing my creativity today?
- What type of self-care am I practicing today?
- What am I grateful for today?

-From the Mental Health Association of East Tennessee



One of the best ways to beat stress is to get moving. We know the gym is closed, but our local [YMCA](#) has a ton of free videos with some of their best classes online for you.

You can also practice mindfulness with your kids. Our Growing Together staff have picked out some of their favorite [guided meditations for you and your family to beat stress together](#):

- For [ADHD](#)
- For kids who need a [cool down](#)
- Family Mindfulness [schedule](#)
- [5 Mindfulness Activities](#)

[GoNoodle](#) is a great online resource for kids mindfulness activities including fitness videos, healthy food games, and practices like yoga and dance.

Again, taking care of yourself is the best thing you can do during this time to help your kids feel safe, connected, and cared for. Take the time to connect and check-in with yourself and do whatever you can to decrease stress and increase connection.

We also want to remind you that [there is help out there](#). Reach out to friends and family during this time to lean on them for strength and support. If you feel that you need a higher level of care, please take a look at these [mental health resources](#) and utilize them to get the support and care you need to be your best for your family.

Resources

Corsicana ISD Counseling Hotline

Available to all CISD students beginning March 30th from 8AM-4PM Monday-Friday. Students and families are encouraged to call 903-641-2334 or email counselorsupport@cisd.org after hours.

Crisis Text Line

For anyone experiencing anxiety or stress during the CO-VID 19 crisis. Crisis counselors are available to text at 741741.

HHSC

Statewide COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week toll-free at 833-986-1919

MHMR

Mental health and Substance Use Disorder emergency support is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call or Text our ICARE Line:

- Call or text us 817-335-3022
- 1-800-866-2465 (Toll free)
- 817-569-4488 (TTY-TDD number for Hearing Impaired)

If you are in a crisis, the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team provides a combination of face-to-face, 24-hour crisis services to children, adolescents and adults in Tarrant County.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Voice: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Text: 1-800-787-3224

Website: www.thehotline.org



National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

Free and confidential support for people or their loved ones who are in distress, prevention and crisis resources and best practices for professionals. Online chat, deaf/hard of hearing services and Spanish available at the website as well.

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

North Texas Behavioral Health Authority

NTBHA is providing a 24/7 Mental Health Support Line for Dallas, Ellis, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro and Rockwall counties for those who are experiencing stress and anxiety related to the current state of emergency.

833-251-7544

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or needing assistance at a higher level of care, please contact NTBHA 24/7 Crisis Line at 866-260-8000.

SAMHSA-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association

SAMHSA wants to remind you that YOUR RECOVERY IS IMPORTANT

They've put together a list of virtual recovery groups that you can be a part of [here](#)

They've also put together 2 guides on how to cope with [social distancing](#) and [sheltering in place](#).

Texas Youth Hotline

This is a dedicated phone line for children or teenagers to ask questions like I just ran away from home, where can I find help or for parents to call seeking advice. Available 24/7.

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Youth_Helpline/default.asp

Call 800-989-6884 or Text 512-872-5777

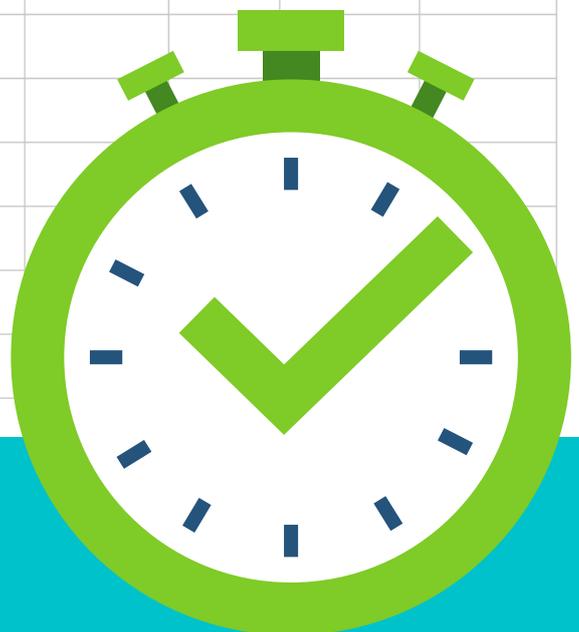
Click on any [underlined words](#) for links to resources

Time Management

One thing we know is that kids thrive when they have a routine.

You may begin to see behavioral issues as kids get off that routine (like when they are out of school for an undetermined amount of time) and have no set expectations for what their day will look like. You can avoid those behavioral issues by making a schedule together. We've provided a couple of ideas below for you to sit down with your kids and decide together what activities they would like to accomplish during the week. This is really a great time to be able to talk to your children about time management. Let them know that they need to work on all of these items throughout the week, but it's up to them as a team to decide when they will do them.

| Flexible Schedule- With your child, pick the activities you want to accomplish each day. | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Week__ | | | | | | |
| Activities: | Monday | Tuesday | Wed. | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Mindful/Relaxing/Spiritual Activity | | | | | | | |
| Math | | | | | | | |
| Reading | | | | | | | |
| PE/Outdoor | | | | | | | |
| Writing/Cursive/spelling | | | | | | | |
| Science/Health | | | | | | | |
| Naptime/Quiet time | | | | | | | |
| Music | | | | | | | |
| Social Studies/Manners | | | | | | | |
| Arts/ Crafts | | | | | | | |



Click on any [underlined words](#) for links to resources

Time Management

Daily Schedule

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Before 9:00 AM | Wake up! | Make your bed, eat breakfast, brush teeth, get dressed |
| 9:00-10:00 | Outdoor Time | Family walk or outdoor play |
| 10:00-11:00 | Academic Time | No Electronics! Reading, homework, study, puzzles, journal |
| 11:00-12:00 | Creative Time | Creative play, drawing, Legos, crafts, music, cooking, baking |
| 12:00-12:30 | LUNCH | |
| 12:30-1:00 | Home Chores | Clean rooms, put away toys, take out garbage, pet care |
| 1:00-2:30 | Quiet Time | Reading, nap, puzzles, yoga |
| 2:30-4:00 | Academic Time | Electronics OK! Educational games, online activities, virtual museum tours |
| 4:00-5:00 | Outdoor time | Family walk or outdoor play |
| 5:00-6:00 | Dinner time | Family dinner, help with clean-up and dishes |
| 6:00-7:00 | Bath time | Bath or shower |
| 7:00-8:00 | Reading/TV time | Relaxing before bedtime |
| 9:00 PM | Bedtime | Put on PJs, brush teeth, clothes in laundry |

You may prefer a more specific or regimented schedule, so we've provided a couple of options for you. We also encourage you to let your kids sleep in a little, keep their bedtimes as close to the original times as possible but let them sleep in. They don't have to be up at 6:30AM for the near future, so go ahead and let them sleep a little longer. You can use that time in the morning to **focus on you and prepare yourself to be the best parent you can be that day**. Take some time to practice mindfulness, prepare for the day, work on work projects, and get in a few cups of coffee. What is important is that your child continues to get **good quality sleep** each night to help their brains continue to grow and strengthen. Remember that sleep is incredibly important to your child's development, so let them sleep. It's an important way for their brain's cells to regenerate and it gives you a rest as well. Sleep time does not equal wasted time. **So, just how much sleep time does my child actually need?**

Time Management

According to the American Pediatrics Association*

| Age Group | Hours per night |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Infants-4 to 12 months old | 12- 16 hours per 24 hour period |
| Children 1-2 years old | 11-14 hours per 24 hour period |
| Children 3-5 years old | 10-13 hours per 24 hour period |
| Children 6-12 years old | 9-12 hours per 24 hour period |
| Teens 13-18 years old | 8-10 hours per 24 hour period |

How much time should my child spend working on school work?

You'll notice in these example schedules that we aren't asking you to spend 8 hours on school work with your child. That just simply isn't possible to do right now, **so how long should your child be working on school work during the day?** Some of our local education leaders have put together a guide based on the age/grade of your child how much time they should spend on academic work each day:

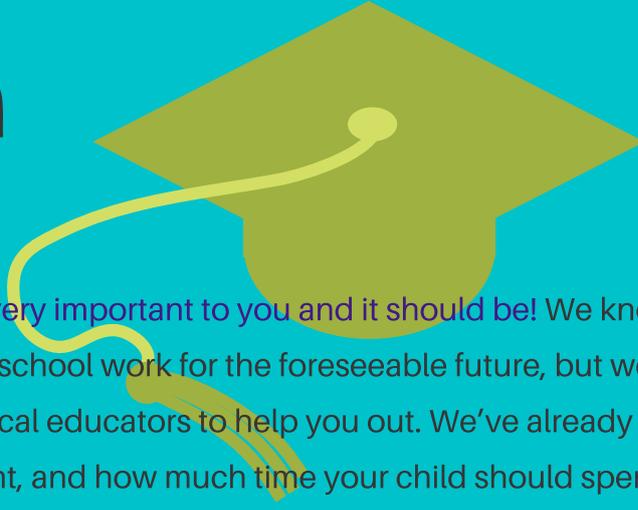


| Age/Grade | Time spent working on school work |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pre-K | 20 minutes |
| Kindergarten | 40 minutes |
| 1st Grade | 1 hour |
| 2nd Grade | 1 hour 20 minutes |
| 3rd Grade | 1 hour 40 minutes |
| 4th Grade | 2 hours |
| 5th Grade | 2 hours 20 minutes |
| 6th Grade | 2 hours 40 minutes |
| 7th Grade | 3 hours |
| 8th Grade | 3 hours 20 minutes |
| 9th Grade | 3 hours 40 minutes |
| 10th Grade | 4 hours |
| 11th Grade | 4 hours 20 minutes |
| 12th Grade | 4 hours 40 minutes |

When creating a schedule for your family, remember to **have grace for yourself**. This isn't normal. You're not a teacher. You're a parent trying to multitask several different parts of your life right now so just do the best that you can. And when you have to pick between forcing your child to do homework and connecting and teaching them a new skill, **pick connection every time**.

Click on any [underlined words](#) for links to resources

Education



We know your child's education is very important to you and it should be! We know you might be anxious about them missing out on school work for the foreseeable future, but we've put together some resources from some of our local educators to help you out. We've already talked a little bit about scheduling, time management, and how much time your child should spend on school work each day, but when they are working on school work **what exactly should they be doing?** We've got a few ideas for you!

First off, if you've got a **young child** why not use this time to teach them about **COVID-19, bacteria, and hygiene**. The Texas A&M Agrilife Extension office has put together a booklet of activities to teach kids about [COVID-19](#).

Your teachers and counselors may have reached out to you with information on school work your child can be working on. We encourage parents to connect and communicate with their child's teachers. We know the teachers are missing their kids and the kids are missing seeing their teachers every day. Some of our teachers have put together a list of great educational apps/websites for kids of all ages:

For our younger kids, we have these recommendations from a local Kindergarten teacher to work on phonics:

[Novel Effect](#) is a great app that can be downloaded to a device. (Music, sound effects, and character voices play at just the right moment, adjusting and responding to your voice as you read your favorite titles together. Promote language development, increase engagement, and make storytime a little more fun for kids (and grown-ups too!))

[Lalilo](#) is free right now. It is a great resource for phonics. Teachers can even go in and assign lessons.

In every game, there are concepts that are taught that help with social skills. We've created a list of [games](#) to use to teach kids everything from counting to vocabulary and strategy.

One of our local kindergarten teachers has created a video to share some of her favorite distance learning resources for teachers to share with their students on [loom](#).

Great websites by Subject:

| Subject | App |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Math | Funbrain |
| Math | Prodigy |
| Math | Math Playground |
| Math | Math Game Time |
| Math | Khan Academy |
| Social Studies | Crash Course (Youtube) |
| Social Studies | Who Was? App/site |
| Social Studies | Nat Geo Kids |
| Social Studies | Time for Kids |
| Social Studies | Smithsonian for Kids |
| Science | Discovery Mindblown |
| Science | NASA Kids Club |
| Science | Amazing Space |
| Science | Code Academy |
| Science | How Stuff Works |
| Other | Brain Pop |
| Other | Ted Talks |
| Other | PBS Kids |
| Other | Duolingo |
| Other | Hello Kids (Drawing) |

Click on any [underlined words](#) for links to resources

Virtual Field Trips

While you are taking a break from learning, or just want to have fun, we've found a couple of fun [virtual field trip ideas](#) to share. While we can't go out on a field trip, more and more [museums, parks, and zoos](#) are putting content online so kids and families can enjoy their content for free.

First, you can virtually ride the rides of [Disney World](#)

Next you can take a virtual tour of some of your favorite parks, museums, and zoos. Here's a few ideas for virtual field trips:

- [Georgia Aquarium](#)
- [Kansas City Zoo](#)
- [National Forests](#)
- [Historic Sites and Museums](#)

Play is often talked about
as if it were a relief from
serious learning.
But for children play is
serious learning.
Play is really the work of
childhood.
-Fred Rogers

www.creativechild.com

Technology Resources

If technology is a barrier for you, some of our local school districts and cable and internet providers are offering free services, hotspots, or devices to help families learn at a distance.

[A list of providers offering assistance for phone and internet service providers can be found here.](#)

[Corsicana High School](#) student technology distribution info: <https://www.cisd.org/Page/14329>

Free WiFi: [Corsicana Public Library](#) parking lot. The password is posted on the library door.

[Northland Cable](#)

[Click here to locate the free WiFi Hotspot near you.](#)

1500 N. Beaton

Phone: (903) 872-3131



Click on any underlined words for links to resources

Empowering Snack Time!

TBRI teaches us that kids do better emotionally when their blood sugar is stable.

Feeding ourselves and kiddos every two hours sure does sound tedious, and adults have all sorts of fears about what all of this extra food might do. However, we know that when we keep kids hydrated and fed every two hours they show gains in self-regulation and experience felt safety.

Here are some suggestions of snacks to keep around that fall on the low glycemic index and help to stabilize blood sugar:

- An apple with a slice of sharp cheddar cheese or spoonful of almond butter
- Baby carrots dipped in hummus or low fat sour cream
- A handful of almonds or walnuts
- Yogurt with berries
- Cheese and nuts
- Dried apricots and raw almonds
- Hard boiled eggs (Kids are weird about hard-boiled eggs, I get it. Coworkers are also weird about hard boiled eggs. You have to embrace hard boiled eggs without shame).
- Air-popped popcorn

[Source](#)

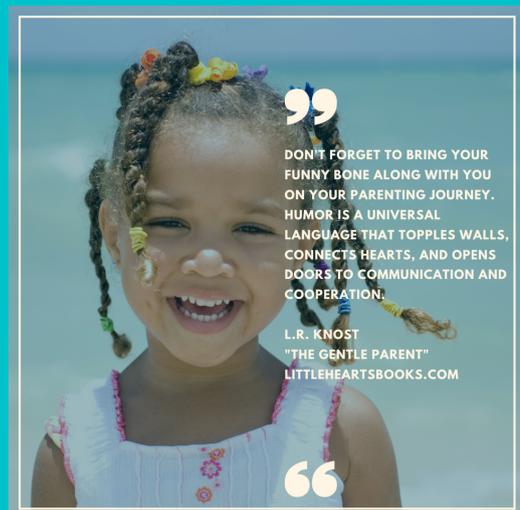


For a list of empowering snacks put together by the TCU Child Development Institute check [here](#) for snacks that will help your child to self-regulate.

Remember to keep your child empowered by hydrating regularly and providing a snack **every 2 hours**. And these aren't such bad ideas for adults as well. We can take care of ourselves as well by staying hydrated and snacking **every 2 hours**.

This is also a great time to **include your child** in your cooking. This is a practical and even fun skill your child can learn to prepare them to adulthood.

Enjoy these [cooking ideas](#) to include your kids in your kitchen! Low on supplies? Check out this [Facebook group](#) learn how to take what's in your pantry and make a meal.



Relationship Building

We've said it before and we will say it again: The most important thing you can do during this time is take care of yourself and connect with your child. We'd like to give you a few ideas for activities you can do with your child that will keep you connected to each other and not connected to the TV, phone, or computer.

There's a lot of great stuff out there on Pinterest and social media, but we've put together some of our favorites including activities you can do [inside](#) that don't include screens, [life skills](#) you can work on with your child, and more activities you can do that [don't involve screens](#).

The "old school" way of parenting said "Children should be seen and not heard". Some of us were raised that way but that did not turn out so great for many of us. To **create connectedness and build trust**, children need to have "voice". This does not mean they need to be in control, but means that they are encouraged to share their feelings, anxieties and search for those deep feelings inside that have positive as well as negative impacts on their behaviors. **Behind every negative behavior is a NEED.** The behavior is like **fever**. It's not the source of the problem (infection) but it is a signal that something is there that should not be there or missing. Historically, we haven't been good investigators to looking for the **emotional "infection"** within our children when they spike a "fever" (the behavior). It's a new way of thinking about behavior. Try it next time your child or teen acts out; ask yourself and them, "What do they/you need?" Maybe they are dis-regulated because they are overly tired, hungry, or getting sick. **Be an investigator!**

Helping children find their "voice" gives them a **sense of control over their environment**. For many reasons, they did not feel this in early infancy and their brain told them **they could not trust or rely on others**. Not feeling this control tends to result in outcomes of **physical violence or manipulation**.



Stay connected with us on our social media page to get more ideas and activities for you and your kids and to talk to a Specialist about your child
[@GrowingTogetherPCHAS](#)

Click on any underlined words for links to resources



Relationship Building

Our Child and Family Specialists have shared some of their favorite therapeutic activities with us that are both fun and help children to connect and self-regulate.

Therapeutic Activity Ideas

- **Red light/green light** (taking turns between children and parents being the leader; if your children respond well to visuals, you can use two paper plates and let them color one red and one green with crayons or markers).
- **Simon Says** (this is integrating shifts of high and low arousal and the ability to pay attention and make decisions when excited; notice if they may need a self-regulation break of taking a few breaths or a reminder to use “eyes and ears” to listen to the leader)
- **Blow bubbles** and take turns choosing which body part to pop the bubble with (elbow, nose, foot, etc.)
- **Cotton/lightweight ball blow** (sit across from each other on the floor or at a table and blow the cotton ball into one another’s hands—practice soft, medium, and deep breaths, and notice how each moves the cotton ball in a different way)
- **Progressive storytelling** w/ optional illustrations (once upon a time there was a.... and let each family member add on to the story in intervals. Each family member can add onto the illustrations too)
- **Rip up construction paper** (glue on regular paper to make a design—good for getting out energy/big feelings)
- **Scribble on paper** (set a timer, scribble, then find and circle objects that you find in the design)
- **Family band** (make music out of things you find around the house—pots and pans, buckets, utensils, etc. Let each person take a turn being the “bandleader” and directing.)
- **Make signs** (Talk to the kids about what people might want to see or hear right now, encouraging messages, etc., and put signs in the yard or in windows)
- **Make sock puppets** out of old socks (great opportunity for kids to give voice/act out their feelings or thoughts with the characters)
- **5-4-3-2-1 Calming/grounding technique** (name 5 things you can see in the room, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear right now, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste)
- **Make a glitter calming jar**—Add 1 cup hot water and 2 TBSP glitter glue into a jar. Add ½ to ¾-inch layer of fine glitter to the bottom of the jar. Fill with water, leaving room to shake. Add chunkier glitter and food coloring (optional). Seal tightly and shake.
- Use for a regulation tool.



Click on any underlined words for links to resources

Relationship Building

- **How is your Engine running? Engine Plate** - Take a paper plate and have your child color three different sections, Green, Blue, and Red on one half section of the plate. Put a tiny hole in the middle of the plate and insert one pipe cleaner or draw an arrow and cut out on construction paper that will reach to each color when moved. Tie the pipe cleaner off on the back so it will hold in place. Do this in a calm time when the child can be engaged. Talk about how when we are mad or upset, our engine is on Red, when we are sad, it is on Blue, and when we are Happy/Doing good, our engine is on Green. Then talk about ways to move the engine to the more desired color when having a mad or sad day. Then when these red or blue days occur, use the Engine Plate to help the child describe their feelings and think of ways to move it to the desired color.



And now it's time for a lesson in Trust-Based Relational Intervention

There are 3 parts to TBRI:

- Connecting**
- Empowering**
- Correcting**

TBRI turns the traditional parenting style on its head by saying that when you connect with your child then empower that child, you'll have to correct them less often and when you do correct your child it will be more effective. TBRI has a lot of great information to provide to us but one of the most exciting things is a little something we call **Nurture Groups**. **Nurture Groups help families to put into practice "Life Value Terms" that enhance their child's brain development and connection and for children to practice giving and receiving care.**

With just a few supplies you have laying around your house you can do a Nurture Group with your family. They normally take anywhere from **20-40 minutes** and can be done in any room of your house, normally with everyone on the floor in a circle.

Here are some [scripts](#) for nurture groups that you and your family can do anytime. We suggest doing a nurture group once a week, and kids of all ages can participate from your little ones to your teenagers.

Relationship Building

Life Value Terms/Scripts

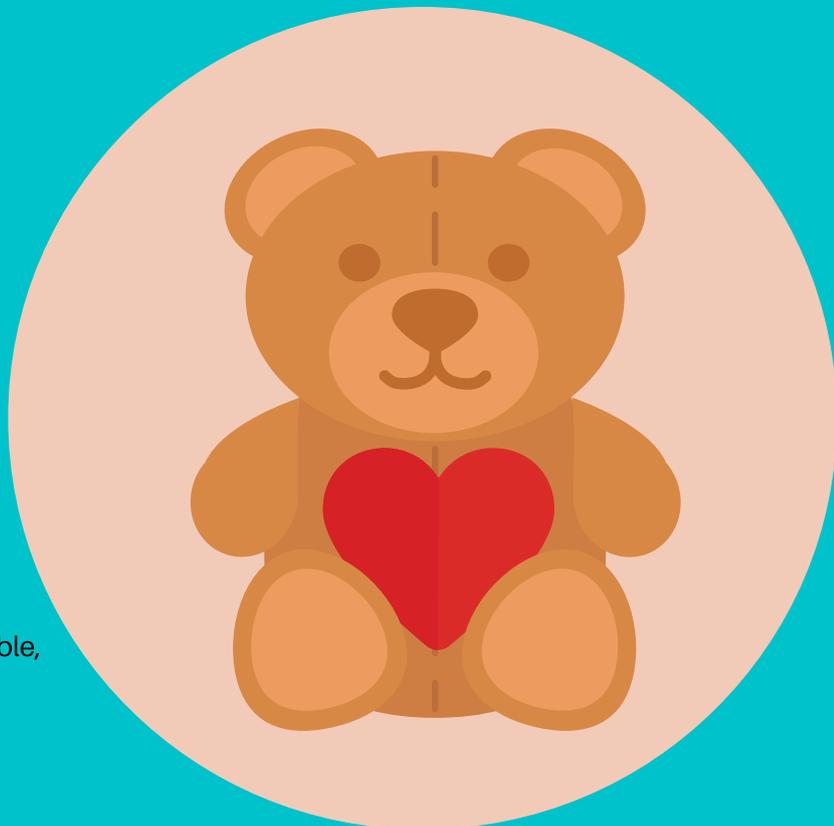
Some of the best ways to teach values to children who have attention problems and sensory issues is by using **simple and brief language**. TBRI recommends "life value terms" or a group of **short, simple phrases** that should be used and reviewed regularly with your child.

TBRI Life Values are short scripts designed to guide children **toward optimal behavior**. What we love most about the TBRI Life Values is that they **create a language of respect** in families, groups, and classrooms. Remember that TBRI Life Values are most effective when they're taught **proactively during moments of calm** when children are **ready to learn**.

Feel free to print the set of 10 TBRI Life Values and **hang them in a child's bedroom** bulletin board, on a refrigerator at home, or in an office to remind yourself to use the **TBRI Life Values** with the children you serve. As the children learn these short scripts, these signs can be a great reminder for them, too.

- **With Respect:** Your children need to use respectful words and actions, plus show respectful body language when interacting with you or others. When they don't, a parent might say "Do you want to try that again with respect?" followed by "Good showing respect!" if the child complies.
- **Use Your Words:** When children are upset, they typically try to use their bodies to communicate, instead of their words. When children shut down verbally, a parent might gently remind them "Use your words and tell me what you need" followed by "Good using your words!" if the child complies.
- **Use choices and compromises:** Remember, you are in control! Use compromises that you are okay with.
- **Ask child for a re-do:** Repeating the behavior with correct respectful behavior and words
- **Use a Time In:** Don't send a child away for time-out (i.e. sending a child to their room). Use a time-in chair or a "think it over" place and when the child is comfortable, then have a Re-Do.
- **Bring the child closer:** So that he knows you are his advocate who will help meet his needs.

TBRI Parenting by Child and Family Program



Click on any underlined words for links to resources

Relationship Building

Correcting

We realize this is a very stressful time for parents, and we also know that when parents are stressed, they are at greater risk for child maltreatment. We want to provide some strategies for the next time your child needs to be corrected whether they are acting out, The Trust Based Relational concept of **IDEAL response** helps caregivers to respond to the level of the child's behavior with the goal of moving the child into a calmer state.

The IDEAL Response is...

Immediate: Deal with the behavior within 3 seconds

Direct: Respond with direct eye contact, be physically close to your child/not yelling from across the room or on your phone

Efficient: Using the fewest words possible (no sermons!)

Action-Based: Offer the child a do-over to practice the way you'd like your child to handle the situation next time

Leveled at the Behavior: Addressing the behavior (not the child)

These videos explain the IDEAL response and provide examples from TBRI developer Karyn Purvis.

As you reflect on correcting principles of TBRI, consider these "refocus" questions:

Do I encourage my child to tell me his or her feelings?

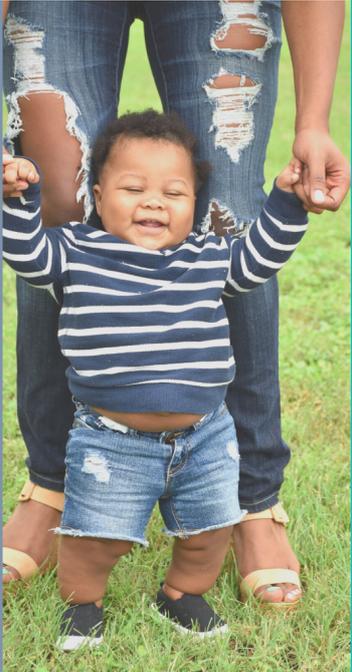
Do I ask my child what he or she needs?

Do I behave consistently?

Do I facilitate joint problem-solving with my child?

Do I simplify my life enough that I can give my child my attention?

Taken from THE CONNECTED CHILD by Dr. Purvis and Dr. Cross



"It's not only the children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it myself."

-Joyce Maynard
Purposeful Parenting

Click on any underlined words for links to resources

Felt Safety

Felt safety means that although a child is truly safe, he or she may not “feel” safe. We as parents are sometimes quick to tell them this is **silly or ridiculous** but our knowledge of their safety does not permeate their brain. Many children may express heightened anxiety or fear in times of stress or crisis. Sometimes this is something new brought on by the crisis, such as Covid-19, mass shootings, or weather disasters.

There are also some children who may express these fears in **times of normalcy**. There are many examples of this, but one might be a child whose fears seem to **overtake** their parent’s ability to reassure. For example, a child may become extremely **heightened or afraid during a thunderstorm** or even when hearing the forecast for disruptive weather. Even in spite of the parents **constant assurance** that there is nothing to worry about and they will be fine, the child may not have the capacity to be consoled. This is what is explained as the child not having **“felt safety”**. Here are some strategies that can help children that exhibit chronic stress or fear that we may label as “behaviors”.

When Fear is in Control - a child focuses strictly on Survival Issues such as:

Safety

Escaping Scary Situations

Making hurts go away

A fearful child cannot grasp:

Long discussions, sermons lectures

Complex reasoning, logic

Stories of what your parents

expected from you

The “fight, flight or freeze” brain can cause a child to:

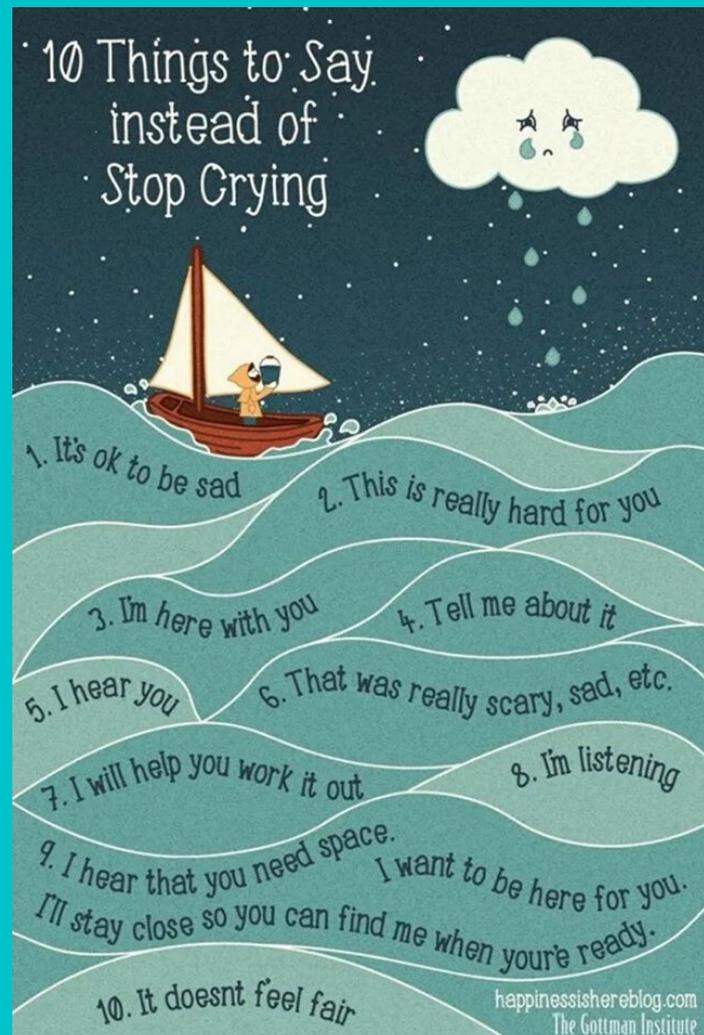
Run away and hide

Lash out physically and verbally

Stonewall or become unresponsive

Become extremely angry or cry

Helping children use their words is the best way we know to express their fears and anxieties.



Felt Safety

Strategies That Reduce Chronic Fear

A. Transitions - Alert your child to the next upcoming activity

Make your child's world **predictable** by announcing what is about to happen

***Example:** "In fifteen minutes, we will put away the toys and get ready for bed."

B. Set a Routine - Make Their Day Predictable:

Discuss the upcoming day's **schedule** with your child; this **lessens anxiety** and can **reduce tantrums**.

***Example:** Make a chart that shows the day's schedule as a visual reminder for your child of what you will be doing/where you will be going that day.

C. Give Appropriate Choices to Share Control:

Without relinquishing **parental control**, you can easily offer simple choices that make a child **feel empowered and less anxious**.

***Example:** "Here's the room where we wait for the doctor. Would you like to sit next to me or go look at the fish tank while we wait?"

D. Speak Simply and Repeat Yourself:

Use **Short phrases** that reduce auditory clutter and improve comprehension; use **simple language** and have the child **repeat what you say**.

***Example:** Use phrases such as "Focus and finish your task" or "Use your words" or "Stop and breathe". "What did you hear me say?"

E. Be an Effective Leader:

Children feel safest with adults who are **kind but firm leaders**. They want to know where the **lines/boundaries** are. If a parent is **indecisive** and lets the child run the show, that can be stressful to the child.

***Example:** "Try that again with respect". "You broke a rule and here is what happens when that rule is broken; now we can start over".

F. Prevent Sensory Overload:

Intense **sights, sounds and bodily sensations** may bewilder and frighten your sensory laden child whose senses haven't **developed fully**.

***Example:** Reduce visual and auditory clutter; keep few toys available, lower the volume of your voice and other electronics. If possible, avoid taking the child to busy and loud places such as grocery stores or carry earplugs for them to wear.

G. Don't Corner Them:

Never put a **traumatized or rebellious child** in a position where he or she feels **cornered or physically threatened**. Always be mindful and respectful of the child's **physical boundaries**.

***Example:** Use just one hand at a time to touch the child, be wary of unexpected touch with a child (ask permission first), and it may not be good to touch a child who is upset.

H. Help Children Identify Safe People:

Children whose early years were not spent in a **stable and safe home** have trouble **recognizing** people likely to harm them.

***Example:** Help your child identify what makes people safe: Safe people are kind to you, will not harm you, will not threaten you, will not ask you to keep secrets, etc.

I. Honor Their Emotions:

Parents need to make it safe for children to **express feelings** without encountering **dismissiveness or ridicule**.

***Example:** "It's okay to be angry that Johnny stole your baseball, but it's not okay to hit or hurt him." "Use your words; I can't tell what you need when you are crying/whining/screaming".



"The most powerful buffer in time of stress and distress is our social connectedness; so let's all remember to stay physically distant but emotionally close. Reach out and connect; even a short text or smiling face on Zoom can help.

Regulate, Relate, Reason."
Dr. Bruce Perry

Helping children to **use their words** is the best way we have found to **reduce their anxiety and fear**. [Click here](#) to learn more about how to help your child gain control over unwanted behaviors.

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Click on any underlined words for links to resources

Staying Connected to Community



Feel encouraged that by practicing social distancing (or what we like to call physical distancing), you are modeling community service! Your choice to keep your family at home is a beautiful act of service to the most medically vulnerable in your area. What you're doing matters. Here are some other ideas to [help your family stay connected to the greater community](#):

- Assuming you have already talked to your kids about what coronavirus is and what you're doing to help keep them safe, begin the conversation by [asking them about how other people in their community may be feeling right now](#). Ask about [healthcare workers, grocery-store employees, kids in their classes, neighbors](#), anyone! Based on that conversation, you may have a better idea of what activities and acts of service will resonate most with them.
- Connect with the staff of a [local nursing home](#) and ask if you can (safely!) deliver or mail [artwork, cards, short stories or letters to residents](#). As you engage your children in making these items, encourage them to think about who they are sending their art to and the message those people [may want or need to hear in this moment](#).
- Consider doing something similar for a local hospital, doctor's office, pharmacy or grocery store. A lot of people are [working so hard right now and risking their own health](#) to keep others' lives running relatively smoothly. Many don't have a choice but to continue going to work. How can your family support them?
- If you have [elderly or immunocompromised neighbors](#), consider getting a [list of needs](#) from them and providing groceries or other supplies via safe delivery. Can your kids help with that process by talking to the person on the phone or dictating the list?
- [Donate food or money to an agency that works with children](#), such as Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services. Engage your kids in this process by helping them [earn money by doing jobs around the house](#). Show them you care by "matching" the money they donate.
- [Make signs](#) with encouraging or funny messages and display them for people walking or driving by. Consider sharing them on social media. We are all looking for [little bright spots](#) right now.
- Go on a [walk around your neighborhood](#) or apartment complex with your family. As you look at the houses, encourage your kids to [say a prayer of health and safety](#) for the people inside.

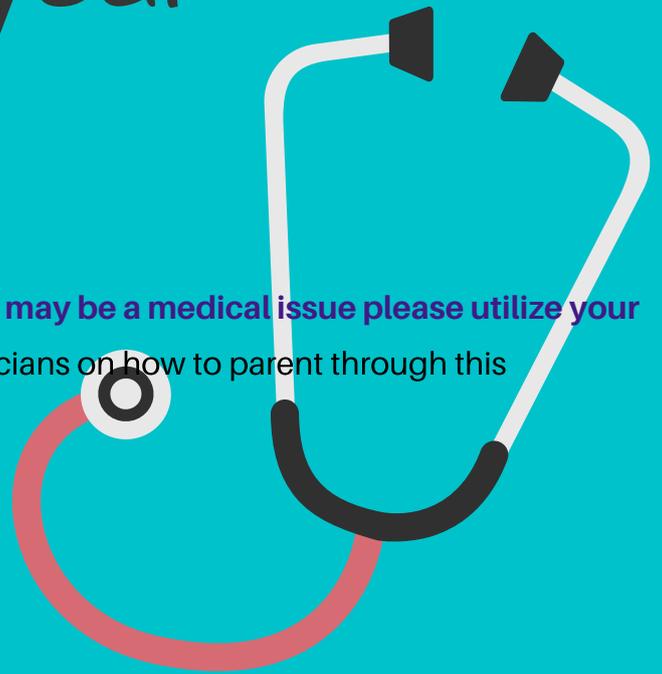
Remember that small [acts of compassion and empathy are magnified in times of uncertainty](#) such as these, when we desperately want and need the comfort of human connection. Now, as ever, we belong to each other.

~ Child and Family Specialist Haley Savage

Advice from your Pediatrician

If you're struggling with your child or feel that there may be a medical issue please utilize your pediatrician. We've shared some advice from pediatricians on how to parent through this unprecedented time.

- For your [new baby](#)
- For your [refrigerator](#)
- For [normalcy](#)



“Out of School and Out of Control: How to Approach Behavior Issues in Kids When You Can’t Leave the House”-Dr. Courtney Smith, MD, FAAP

If you are noticing more tantrums from your toddlers, more attitude from your teens, or rising frustration within your family as a whole, **you are not alone**. Because of stay at home guidelines, many parents and children have been forced into a “new normal” now doing school and work from home or shifting into new roles within the family. Add a grumpy, defiant, or exhausted child to the mix and it’s easy to **feel like you’re drowning**.

First, let’s start with some **behavior basics**. While at times it may seem like your child is pushing your buttons just to test you, most children are not being intentionally disobedient. We know that behavior is an **outward manifestation of what is going on within that child**. Think of behavior as the tip of the iceberg, or the part you can see above the water. However, the bulk of the iceberg lies below the water and keeps the ice afloat. That part is made up of things like **anxiety, fear, sleep deprivation**, and other factors that ultimately shape the behavior. Many of those underlying factors are hard for children to identify or talk about, but looking at the cause of behavior is key to redirecting and reshaping that behavior.

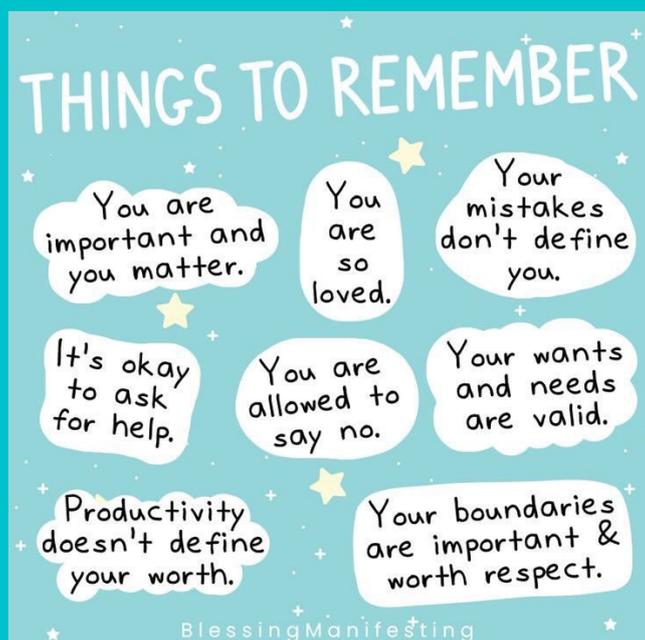
So **how do we address the causes of unwanted behavior**? Anxiety and fear are important drivers of behavior. Toddlers and younger children are often very dependent on a predictable schedule. There aren’t many things under their control, so knowing “what comes next” is important. **Creating predictable routines** can often help decrease anxiety about the unknown and reduce tantrums. For older children and teens, routine is also important, but watching the COVID-19 pandemic unfold is enough to create high levels of anxiety. **Talk to your kids!** Ask them what they think about the events going on and what they understand about them. You may be able to correct misinformation and reassure them at the same time. Let kids know it’s OK to be frustrated or worried and show them outlets to express those emotions rather than **ignoring those feelings**.

Advice from your Pediatrician

Healthy meals and exercise are important for growing brains as well. It's hard for kids (and adults) to keep their cool when they are hungry or just need to move. While eating out or going to the playground might not be an option right now, there are a lot of activities you can do as a family to work those muscles and prevent hunger from driving that difficult behavior. Sleep is also important, and just because kids may not be waking up as early for school, **staying up all night watching movies to playing games can have major consequences** when its time to do homework or school assignments the next day. **Daily schedules should include meals, wake up time, and bedtime as well.**

Lastly, **help kids connect with one another and family members who they may not be able to see in person** right now. **Kids can feel isolated** just like us, especially when they are used to being at school and extracurricular activities. Create virtual meetings among family members, share a meal together via Facetime, or involve friends or family members for a "virtual" story time. **Write letters or send words of encouragement** to others and show your kids the importance of **thinking about others during times of crisis.**

So next time you find yourself ready to **pull your hair out** because of your child's behavior, take a moment to think about the causes behind that behavior. And if you need some help (which we all do sometimes), **reach out to your pediatrician.** We are here for you as well, and many of us are navigating those toddler tantrums and teen angst **right alongside you.**



Local Crisis Resource Guide

This [resource guide](#) was developed by the [Navarro County Early Childhood Coalition](#) to assist community members in navigating and staying informed during the CO-VID 19 crisis. We know that organizations across our community are **changing their service hours, service methods and offerings**, and may have specific policies and procedures to keep the public safe. We've done our best to compile as much accurate information as we can. If you would like to add something to this list or revise a listing, please fill out this form and we will [update](#) it.

In this guide you'll find a variety of resources from [food programs](#), [school meals](#), [childcare](#), [parent support groups](#), [employment assistance](#), and [transportation](#).



Conclusion

This is an unprecedented time in all our lives. None of us have ever experienced anything like this. In fact, America has not experienced anything like this since 1918 when the Spanish Flu flooded the country. That was 102 years ago! **This is hard.** We all need extra support and encouragement during this time in our lives. Some of us already had other things going on in our families; grief, family conflict, loss of relationships, financial hardships, depression and anxiety and many other things too long to list. **This makes this time of staying home and parenting even harder!** We wanted you to know we care about you and this is our way to reach and personally touch you and your family during this time. We hope that when needed, you will reach out to someone you trust and sincerely hope that something in this Staying at Home Guide will help you in some way. It's long and a lot of information. **Take only the parts you need, know you are doing the best you can, and please pass it forward to someone you care about.**

Stay healthy , connected, and may your children be well.

~ The Navarro County Early Childhood Coalition

Click on any [underlined words](#) for links to resources