

HOW TO MANAGE ANXIETY AND STRESS AT THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

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Coronavirus, coronavirus and more coronavirus. By now we are not talking about anything else and, inevitably, our lives have been turned upside down by the serious emergency that the world is experiencing. Even in a complicated situation like this, however, it is important to stay calm and not panic. There is no doubt that we feel scared and disoriented. Being in quarantine, not being able to go to places you frequented every day (often even at work), not seeing your friends or relatives, are putting a lot of strain on people. Maybe we can't see them, because they don't live with us and at this moment we certainly can't have family reunions or parties, but nothing prevents us from often hearing our parents, grandparents, relatives, friends or anyone who gives us confidence or with whom we love to talk. Today I would like to talk to you about how to reduce anxiety and manage the stress of adults and children. Here are some tips. First of all, if we have to spend a lot of time at home, it is easy to fall prey to bad habits like eating too much or badly. Instead, we take this opportunity to **maintain a healthy lifestyle** that includes proper diet, the right amount of sleep and exercise (you can also train a little at home).

The children feel that something has changed and we should explain the situation well, obviously with the right words and modalities according to age. Little ones can respond to stress in different ways: being angry, anxious, going back to bed, etc. We try to be empathetic towards them, to listen to them more and to give them the right attention. Children now more than ever need the love and attention of adults, so let's try to reassure them, talk to them kindly and try to find new opportunities for them to play and relax even at home (ahead of ideas on how turn the children's lockdown into something fun).

Another very important point is to limit the **viewing of the news and the reading of catastrophic news**. It is not always good to know the bulletin of this epidemic, given that it is one thing to know the facts and rules to follow, another and to be encompassed by the many, too many news that go around this situation, generating alarmism.

We know that for children, especially the youngest ones, it is important to follow the usual routines and respect certain times for eating, sleeping, etc. It is good at this time not to change anything, if possible, or to help them find a new routine at home that includes moments of study and learning as well as others to play and relax. Even children have the right to know what's going on and they need to be provided with clear information on how they can also participate in an important mission: block the

advance of the virus. Depending on their age, it should be reassuringly explained what could happen: for example, a family member may not feel well and end up in the hospital where doctors will help him recover. There are also some very nice videos on the net to explain the situation. You can **create a routine**. Wake up, breakfast, get dressed, work, homework, lunch. Everyone must have the day organized, as it happened when you went out. Distribute the commitments both in your day and in that of your children. For the little ones you can use images to schedule the time.

Spring cleaning: It's time to clean mosquito nets and blinds, to pull everything out of the closets and eliminate the superfluous. Eliminating old things and cleaning up psychologically helps because it lightens. Tidying up and arranging gives you the idea of cleaning and preparing the nest before birth, when we will return to "life".

Birthday around this time? Use **social media**. Blow out the candles in video call. Aperitif or snack with friends? On video. In short, do not be afraid of abusing video calls, do not be ashamed. It is not like hugging, but today is the only way to get in touch with those we love. Who wants a party together? Especially teenagers tend to live within the 4 walls of their bedroom. Very well, but there are times of the day when you are all together: movies, board games, dinner ... You have to have fun and do it together.

No to countdown. Do not count the days left until the end of the #stayathome but mark the past days on the calendar with a colored marker. Always look at the road ahead, not the one that's missing. As said before, **no to the news minute by minute**. Watch the newspapers in the morning and one TV news per day and not before going to sleep. Do not live on social networks and on the net in compulsive search for news. And don't just talk about covid19.

These are some of the nice ideas that adults can follow to reduce anxiety and manage stress. The children most affected by the quarantine are undoubtedly the children: no school, no outdoor activities, no bike ride and no afternoon in the park. Will they be bored? So what to do at home to spend time with your kids during the lockdown? So let's start with a nice idea: **the box of surprises**. You could fill a box of snacks, films, coloring books, stickers, picture books, toys, chores to do. Each day invite the children to choose something from the box; **young children love to do everything themselves**. Have them mix flour, sugar, milk and eggs to prepare the biscuits. In this way, time will pass quickly and children will learn many new things; **plasticine do-it-yourself**. Choose a recipe that does not require cooking, so children can help you prepare it without danger. For example, you could make a mixture

based on water and corn starch; **teach children songs!** You can teach him 'The Old Farm', 'baa baa black sheep' and many others. It is also possible to organize a little concert for children, if there are more children in the family. Whoever wins has a prize!

If you laugh, you lose: place yourself in a semicircle and make faces. The first who laughs loses and starts to make faces to make others laugh. The last child left wins! You can also establish small prizes here; **outdoor cinema:** as spring approaches, in the afternoon you can place the TV outside on the balcony and choose a film suitable for the age of the children. Prepare some popcorn and pretend to be the ticket seller: give each child a ticket and a bowl of popcorn. Then start the movie on TV; **you can organize role games:** that is, the participants pretend to be someone else. So you can create beauty salons, market stalls and even school classes. Fantasy to you. One of the most difficult problems to overcome during the quarantine spent at home with children is to put a brake on their mobility. So why not create a **mini fitness course.** With what you have at home, such as chairs, tables, bottles, circles, the measuring tape for example, you can create a path where you can jump, do the slalom, walk in balance, go under it as if it were a tunnel. The goal? A thread to cut, as if the child were at the Olympics.

Help! The floor is on fire. Here is another fun game that tests children. Make the children believe that the floor of the house is full of small fires and the only way to go from one room to another is to create a "safe path" using everything in the house: cushions, blankets, sheets of paper, clothes. A way to stimulate the body and mind of the little ones and do some physical activity with them.

The chest of disguises. Another creative pastime is that of the disguise trunk. Use a box large enough to hold clothes and accessories that you no longer use but which could be excellent disguises for the little ones. The game consists of fishing at will from the trunk and playing a character that you have decided together before. The end could be to invent a story or a mission with the invented character.

The jar of calm. Restoring children to calm, for example after a cry or a fight, can be even more complicated in this period in which the stress level is higher. A good method to make them relax is the Montessori one of the jar of calm. How does it work? In a jar, insert colored glitter, glue and hot water, taking care to leave a free space to be able to shake the contents. Shake the jar well and you will see that the glitter will stick to the wall of the container giving a beautiful optical effect that has relaxing properties. The best colors to choose for the glitter of the calm jar are blue and blue, as they have a high relaxing power for the eyes. This face we think of older children.

A nice alphabetical quiz. A game that also aims to improve their dictionary and language skills a little. It is played as a team or individually and each participant writes 21 questions on a sheet. The answer to these questions must be a single word, the initial of which must correspond to the letters of the alphabet: it starts from A and goes up to Z, so in total the words are 21. The children write the questions and answers on two different sheets and at the end the participants exchange the sheets to check the outcome. The winner is the one who finishes answering the questions first and scores the most points, considering that for each correct answer you earn one point.

If you have a garden or balcony you could try **planting flowers.** Watching plants grow is a fun and educational experience for children. Growing plants teach children how nature works and the responsibility to take care of something. Have you ever thought about creating a **time capsule?** It is a pleasant thing to do together with the family. All you need is a shoebox, pen, stickers or other decoration materials and memories of each family member. Ask each person to choose something that means a lot to them, or something they designed and put it in the bag. You can also fill in a diary where you can write what was going on in the news, who was number 1 on the charts, etc. Adults can also write letters to their children to have them open in the future and children can write letters to their future self. When you are done, close the box and write "Don't open until ..." at the top!

Board games are a wonderful way to spend time together and can also be educational. Make every family member choose their favorite and play a new game every day, or the same if you love it so much!

What animal is it? Every day you discover a new animal with images and sounds. The farm animals are an excellent starting point because you can, for example, sing "In the Old Farm" and teach them the sounds of the animals and keep them entertained. What do you think of building a cardboard castle? It is not only fun but it is also interactive: a nice way to have fun for parents and children. You can give vent to your creativity and involve the whole family.