

# ANXIETY GONE *Vinal*

## HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR FAMILY, ESPECIALLY THE CHILDREN, HANDLE CRISES?

The coronavirus outbreak has triggered an enormous outpouring of anxiety. The escalating crisis is in the news every time we turn on the TV or tap on our phones. Life has suddenly turned upside down, and the rules are being rewritten daily. Families are working and studying at home. Some are trying to stay healthy in confined spaces, with limited resources, and often a long way from those they love. When we feel anxious, we're more likely to be irritable with each other, and that causes even more anxiety.

Here are some tips for helping yourself and your family through this crisis and any others that come your way.

### MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY

The more our children feel loved, safe, and happy, the less anxious they'll be. So one of the first things you can do as a parent is to manage your own anxiety around COVID-19. Find out the latest reliable information about staying safe, and help everyone in your family to follow the advice. Limit the amount of time you spend reading the anxiety-provoking news. Look for the heartwarming stories of kindness and generosity in this crisis, and share these with your children. Quiet your own heart with God's reassurances and your favorite Bible verses.



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### **TEACH CALM PRACTICES**

Tell your children what you do to calm yourself when you feel anxious so they can learn tips to manage their own fears. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, try some of the ideas in this article so that less of your distress spills onto your family. Find a quiet place to talk to the people who listen to your feelings and help you feel calmer.

### **NOTICE WHAT THEY'RE FEELING**

Pay close attention to what your family is feeling, looking out for signs of worry. Some children go quiet, others might become moody, and some might behave more roughly with those around them or play in ways that are destructive. Children and teenagers might not know how to start a conversation about how they're feeling. Spend time alone with them, doing something that they really enjoy, before opening up a conversation about their concerns.

### **LISTEN CAREFULLY**

Listen to your family members' fears. Stop what you're doing, look into their eyes, and show that you care by hugging or touching them warmly. Explain that it's normal to feel worried when scary things happen in the world, and the best thing to do is to talk about it so you can care for each other and work things out together. Write out each worry on a separate piece of paper and think of practical things you can do together to manage those concerns. Try not to dismiss children's fears or put them down for being worried or they'll be less likely to talk to you about their feelings in the future.

### **CHECK IN DAILY**

A crisis brings up all kinds of different emotions and challenges for each of us. Check in with one another every day by sharing your saddest moments together and comforting each other. Then share your happiest moments and celebrate in a fun way. Tell each other the most surprising thing you learned in the day, or the most beautiful thing you saw or heard, or when you experienced God's love.

### **BE HONEST**

When children ask us hard questions about the pandemic, we need to answer them honestly and simply, without too much extra information. If we "lie" to help them feel better, it will make it harder for them to trust us. You might say something like, "Yes, a lot of people are getting very sick and some of them are dying, but most people get better. Many people in the world are working really hard to find a solution, and lots of people, right here around us, are doing amazing things to take care of others."

### **STAY BUSY**

When negative thoughts and concerns take over our brains, they can make us feel even more worried. Learning a new skill and engaging in hobbies, construction kits, jigsaw puzzles, cooking, reading, mind puzzles, and arts and crafts can help to distract children and teenagers from the spiral of anxious thoughts, especially when everyone joins in.

### **TRY GRATITUDE**

Thankfulness can be a great antidote to anxiety. When we remember the positive things in our lives, we're more likely to feel calmer and more joyful. Go through the alphabet as a family, listing all the things you're thankful for, beginning with each of the letters. Walk through your house and name 10 things you're thankful for in each room.

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### LEARN TO SELF-SOOTHE

Help your child or teenager make a list of things that help them feel better when they're upset. Sipping cool water and blowing the biggest bubbles possible can help them breathe in naturally calming patterns. Hugs, laughing at jokes and funny video clips, gentle tickling, back rubs, warm bubble baths, playing games, baking bread, making a meal together, being creative, and focusing on the intricate details of nature might be items to put on their list.

### BE KIND

When we're compassionate and think of others, we're naturally calmed as well. Check out the kindness activities you can do from home at: [https://ted.adventist.org/images/Family/Kindness\\_home\\_final.pdf](https://ted.adventist.org/images/Family/Kindness_home_final.pdf). Help your children to make colorful and encouraging posters to put in the windows of your home to give hope and joy to the people who walk down your street. Make cards to send to lonely relatives and create gifts together.

### WORSHIP

In this time of anxiety and stress, focus on Bible verses that bring peace and comfort. Learn them in fun ways and sing Scripture songs based on these verses. Read some of these passages together: Revelation 21; 1 John 4:18; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; 1 Peter 5:7. Act out the story of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41) and reflect on how He calms the storms in our world and in our hearts. If you are looking for creative worship ideas to do at home together, check out

the family worship placemats that you can download and print at: <https://ted.adventist.org/family-ministries/family-spirituality>.

### PRAY

At times of major crisis, such as this COVID-19 pandemic, we can become overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness and tragedy. Encourage your family to pray for all the suffering people, those who have lost loved ones, the medical staff, and the scientists who are looking for cures, medicines, and vaccines. Anxious children may need interactive prayers that they can see and experience. Draw around your hands and cut out the shape. Imagine this is the hand of God. Write your worries on the palm of the hand. Then remember that God cares about us very much and we can leave all our worries in His hands.

These are challenging times. None of us has a clear road map about how this pandemic will be resolved. We will have moments of anxiety as we face difficult challenges and decisions. Talking about our dilemmas together, comforting one another, and praying for one another will help us navigate this unknown territory.

But we can be sure that God does have the map; He knows how this will work out, and we know that He is lovingly longing to take us all away from this broken world. One day He will wipe away all our tears forever and calm all of our fears with His love.

For now, He is with us and our families through this crisis. He holds us all close to His heart. He cries when we cry, and He hurts when we hurt. He comforts us in all that we are facing so that we can comfort others and pass on His love. And He invites us to hand over all our anxieties to Him, because He cares so much for each of us. ■

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