



**ARNEC**  
Asia-Pacific Regional Network  
for Early Childhood

# How can parents support the social-emotional well-being of their young children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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**Today, the entire world is dealing with a dreadful challenge of COVID-19** and young children are the ones highly affected by the pandemic. Adults may think that children do not observe the changes happening around but, on the contrary, children are very sensitive to their surroundings. During this critical time, it is very crucial for the parents to provide adequate social and emotional support so that their young children can be protected from the long-term impacts of the pandemic, including their physical, social and emotional well-being. Find below practical measures parents can do to support their children:

## 1. Be there for your child

The presence of a supportive and responsive caregiver is significant to support young children to cope with the effects of the pandemic. Not being fully aware about the situation and the lack of access to the outside world may generate change in their behaviour. It is important to create a conducive environment at home where

caregivers are present with the child and engage with different activities on a regular basis.

## 2. Create a safe environment

A safe environment at home is where a child can talk to you freely and share positive relationships. This can be done by making efforts to get together with your child. The length of the time is not important. What matters is that both the parents take out time to talk and listen to their child.

## 3. Follow a planned routine

Routines are very important for young children, but new ones need to be created as the pandemic has disrupted their usual routines. Maintaining routines can help children feel safe. Keeping regular sleeping times, mealtimes, setting a daily time to learning and playing together, reading, or singing songs together can help a lot.

## 4. Provide opportunities to deal with stress

When young children feel stressed, their bodies activate their stress response systems. To help them manage these reactions, it is important to create opportunities:

- to play with your child and
- for your child to play alone, and not necessarily having always to play with an adult.

Also, encourage your child to engage in activities that help them self-regulate (e.g., exercise, breathing exercises, regular routines for sleeping and eating).

## 5. Keep your child busy

With schools being closed and many parents continuously working from home, it can be a challenge to keep children both busy and relaxed. When children get bored, their levels of worry and disruptive behaviors may increase. In these situations, parents can provide opportunities for engaging in different activities like free play, blocks, clay modelling, art, music, etc. Children need ample time to engage in joyful play and learning experiences without worrying about the pandemic.

## 6. Tell stories

Stories help a lot in building socio-emotional skills among children. You can tell variety of stories which can enable your child to understand about various situations, feelings and emotions. There are many stories available online which can be referred for telling a story to your child. You can use various methods for telling stories such as reading aloud from a book, storytelling with pictures or props, or use voice modulations etc.

These simple practical strategies suggested above can help you engage meaningfully with your child. Keep looking. Keep playing!



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Meenakshi Dogra is an Early Childhood Education (ECE) professional. She has worked on various research projects related to ECE, within and outside India. Meenakshi led a multi-state pan India research project on developing Early Learning and Development Standards for children and conducted the review of ECE curriculum across six states, while working with the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi. Outside India, she is an international consultant for ECE and has worked with UNICEF Pacific and in Uzbekistan. At present, she is one of ARNEC's National Representatives for India.

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