

Watching smart, avoiding news overload in the time of coronavirus

March 17 2020, by Ayleen Barbel Fattal



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Continued media exposure to stressful events can have a significant impact on a child's psychological well-being. With the COVID-19 pandemic dominating news cycles, psychologist Jonathan Comer offers

tips on how to manage media exposure during this stressful time.

- Keep a daily schedule. Stability and structure are reassuring to [children](#). Maintain your [child](#)'s typical waking times, mealtimes, and bedtimes throughout school closures and quarantines.
- Find out what they know. As much as possible, stick to answering questions rather than volunteering too much information. When clarifying details, explain the [current events](#) in a factual manner, without giving unnecessarily disturbing or graphic details.
- Watch smart and avoid overexposure. Stick to credible information outlets and limit excessive news consumption. Watching the news "around the clock" does not typically provide any more or better information than you get from briefly checking in with the news a couple of times per day.
- Monitor social media. For some, social media is a way to stay connected. Unfortunately, it often spreads misinformation and focuses on the emotional aspects of stressful situations. Setting limits to the use of digital devices can help.
- Be confident. Research shows that during stressful times children feel more secure when their parents act calm in front of them. Pay attention to your own emotions and be careful not to show your child excessive displays of emotion.
- Feelings are normal. Let children know that it is normal to feel upset, scared or angry. You want children to accept their feelings.
- Praise positive thoughts. When your child offers positive or hopeful thoughts, be sure to praise him or her. Tell children how proud you are of them and encourage them to keep thinking along those lines.
- Encourage them to take action. Have children write thank you letters to [medical professionals](#) or elected officials who are working to keep the community safe. Children can also make cards to show their appreciation to local heroes who are finding

unique ways to help others.

Comer has conducted extensive research on the psychological impact of traumatic events on youth. As director of the Mental Health Interventions and Technology Program at FIU's Center for Children and Families, he conducts research on expanding the quality, scope and accessibility of mental health care for children and adolescents.

Provided by Florida International University

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