

# A COVID-19 COPING TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS IN RECOVERY



**The Triple Challenges of  
Managing Caregiving, Recovery and COVID-19**



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## INTRODUCTION

This booklet is intended for a global audience of parents and caregivers who are in all stages of recovery from substance use disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was specifically designed to include both straight-forward and easy-to-read strategies as well as more in-depth explanations and resources.

These materials were carefully tailored to address the needs of parents/caregivers seeking and in recovery as well as the needs of treatment/recovery professionals working with such individuals. While some theoretical information is included in these pages, the materials are intended to be of hands-on and highly practical use.

The need for this practical and supportive information became apparent early in 2020 when around the world social workers, child welfare advocates, substance use professionals, and others noted troubling increases within their caseloads and communities in rates of domestic violence, returns to drug use, and reports of child neglect and abuse. These increases appeared to coincide with the onset of COVID-19 lockdown conditions.

A review of the literature revealed that while some materials existed to guide and support caregivers *in general* during COVID-19, very few materials existed to support caregivers *in recovery* during COVID-19. Moreover, virtually no materials existed for caregivers *in recovery facing multiple issues* during COVID-19 lockdown conditions (e.g., drug use in the home, children with SUD, increased chances of domestic violence and child abuse.)

The challenges facing parents/caregivers seeking and in recovery are potentially overwhelming. The Addiction Policy Forum in the U.S. conducted a pilot study to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs). A web-based survey was administered to a network of patients, families and survivors between April 27 and May 8, 2020 in which 1,079 SUD patients and impacted individuals responded by completing the survey. Key takeaways from the survey pointed to emotional and health consequences of COVID-19, including overdose rates and barriers in safely accessing care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Top emotions among respondents were worry, sadness, fear, and loneliness.

The main feature of this booklet includes seven tip-sheets which offer parents and caregivers seeking and in recovery from substance use disorders age-appropriate and comprehensive strategies for managing the triple challenges of caregiving, engaging recovery, and staying safe during COVID-19. Each of the seven tip sheets should be distributed according to need (i.e., ages of children). Accompanying each of the tip sheets is an explanation page with additional COVID-19 coping resources on the relevant topics, including more in-depth insights on how to care for children at each age and in accordance to *each developmental stage that is appropriate for that age*.

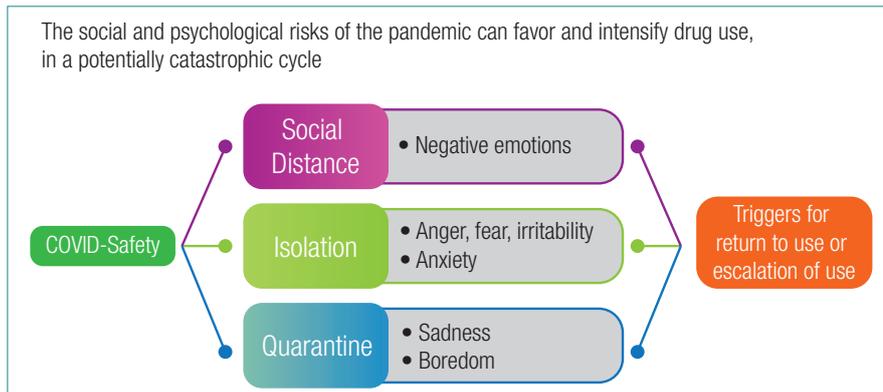
While this booklet is written specifically for the context of COVID-19 challenges and circumstances, it is worth noting that many of the strategies presented in this booklet for engaging recovery, staying healthy and safe, and nurturing one's self and the children under one's care, can also be applied to other lockdown conditions in which parents/caregivers seeking and in recovery may find themselves in the future. This may include future pandemics, natural disasters, such as typhoons and earthquakes, as well as social upheaval and political unrest that can lead to the set-up of refugee camps and other conditions of extreme isolation. Clearly, there are many circumstances which can both threaten and complicate caregiving needs, health and safety concerns, and the challenges involved in recovering from substance use disorders.

Finally, the key message to readers of this booklet is one of hope. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, this booklet encourages parents and caregivers to recognize that you are indeed not alone in your feelings of being overwhelmed; there is way to cope, grow, and even find joy amidst the challenges. The tip sheets are chockful of helpful tips, including how to talk to children of all ages about COVID-19, how to connect with the broader recovery community, how to balance self-care and parenting, and how to manage potential triggers of a return to substance use that can be made worse during lock-down conditions.

## #1 Tip Sheet

### Growing Through Isolation: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

In a strange kind of paradox, the actions we all need to take to keep ourselves and loved ones safe during Covid-19 are the same actions that can also make us feel lonely, isolated, and sometimes trapped at home.



2. Create and keep the same routine every day and involve your children in the structure.

A lack of structure and routine creates uncertainty. Uncertainty creates a deep sense of insecurity for children.

3. Practice being emotionally available to your children every day.

Children crave their parent/caregiver's positive attention. Caregiving is MUCH

MORE than giving a child food, clothing and shelter. They need your emotional presence and attention. Set aside 20 minutes every day to:

- a. Turn off your phone, TV, or other screens
- b. Listen to them, look at them and give them your full attention

For parents/caregivers and children in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems.

Children who grow up with caregivers in active addiction or early recovery need even more support than other children to:

- avoid emotional problems
- to thrive in school and
- to form and maintain healthy relationships

Children are “mirrors” of their caregiving environments. That means when caregivers model mental and physical health, then their children will “reflect back” with their own mental and physical health.

Here are three tips for having a healthy mind and body, and ways to help children have vibrant mental and physical health.

1. Practice recovery as connection with self, others and a higher-power. Spend 20 minutes every day meditating, praying, or practicing a sense of calm connection between your thoughts and body movements. Once a day talk with another person in a positive way.

Have children or teenagers help plan the routine for the day. Getting their help to make the schedule means they are more likely to follow it.



- Eating together can reduce isolation
- Pledge to only talk about issues that support each other and avoid criticizing or being un-kind



- Find a place in the home where children can complete some learning every day
- Give children a specific task to do to help the family every day



- Designate a time every day for children and teens to talk to their friends, get outside and walk, run or move
- Make time for the family to find joy in each other with telling stories, playing games, singing or other healthy activities

- c. Have fun with your children, say positive things about them

Following these tips will help your recovery and your children to grow up mentally and physically healthy!

## #1 Tip Sheet Explanation

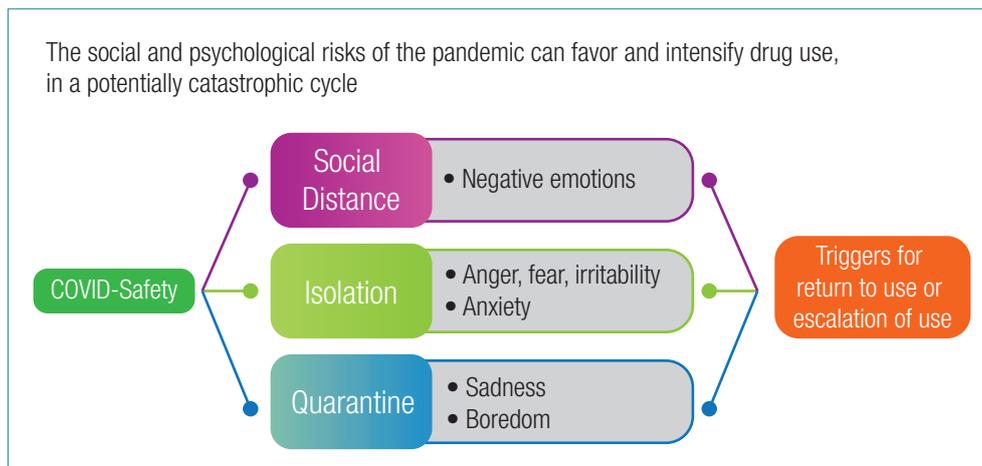
### Growing Through Isolation: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

This page highlights and expands on points made in the #1 Tip Sheet.

**Tip:** The actions we all need to take to keep ourselves and loved ones safe during Covid-19 are the same actions that can also make us feel lonely, isolated, and sometimes trapped at home.

“on edge”, sadness and boredom. All of these emotions again are like striking a match to light a fire of craving or a want to use drugs. Thus, we need to find healthy ways of managing our emotions because drug use is an unhealthy way of coping, and will only make things worse for you and your children in the long run.

**Tip:** For parents/caregivers and children in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems.



*Explanation:* Parents/caregivers will likely feel fear, anger, frustration and maybe even despair during the pandemic. It may be helpful to validate these feelings. Share with them that it is unfortunate that the actions we all need to take to keep ourselves and loved ones safe during Covid-19 are the same actions that can also make us feel lonely, isolated, and sometimes trapped at home.

*Explanation of the figure:* This figure shows the actions we need to all take to keep ourselves and others safe from COVID-19. That means we need to maintain social distance from others. For example, you want to keep the length of a bicycle in between yourself and others that you do not live with every day. That also means we may not be able to touch or hug those we do not live with. That can create negative emotions like hate, anger, jealousy, sadness and frustration. Such emotions can be like striking a match to light a fire of craving or a want to use drugs. Another action our governments may ask us to take is to isolate from others or even quarantine if you have been around someone who has COVID-19. This action of not being able to leave where we live for weeks can create feelings of anger, fear, restless, being

**Children who grow up with caregivers in active addiction or early recovery need even more support than other children to:**

- avoid emotional problems
- to thrive in school and
- to form and maintain healthy relationships

**Children are “mirrors” of their caregiving environments. That means when caregivers model mental and physical health, then their children will “reflect back” with their own mental and physical health.**

*Explanation:* Parents/caregivers and their children who live or have lived in substance use circumstances may feel stress more than other people and may need tools and ideas to cope with stress in new and healthy ways. Research has shown that children who grow up in homes and families where active substance use happens are at risk for emotional problems (for example often show a mood of unhappiness or depression), may have behaviors that do not match the circumstance (e.g., anger outbursts in the classroom), may have problems with learning, paying attention for long periods of

time and getting good grades, and problems with building or keeping satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. The good news is that when parents/caregivers get support and learn to use tools that help them manage stress and emotions, children can observe and mirror back these positive ways to reduce stress and manage their emotions too.

**Here are three tips for having a healthy mind and body, and ways to help children have vibrant mental and physical health.**

**1. Practice recovery as connection with self, others and a higher-power.**

Spend 20 minutes everyday meditating, praying, or practicing a sense of calm connection between your thoughts and body movements. Once a day talk with another person in a positive way.

*Explanation:* Recovery is defined as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. People living in active substance use disorders are often isolated and lonely. When people stop using substances and come into recovery, they find connection to themselves in that they get to know their feelings, emotions and how to help themselves cope with all of the things that life throws at them. People in recovery talk about feeling deep and fulfilling connection with others like their mutual support community and healing relationships with others in their lives. A final part of connection for many people in recovery is reporting feeling close to a higher-power through prayer. Thus, to practice these types of connections with self, others and a high-power, meditating, reaching out to talk to someone who is a positive and supportive person in your life as well as prayer may be helpful to remain in recovery. Further, when you are calm and at peace, the children you care for are also more likely to be calm and at peace too.

**2. Create and keep the same routine every day and involve your children in the structure.**

A lack of structure and routine creates uncertainty. Uncertainty creates a deep sense of insecurity for children.

Have children or teenagers help plan the routine for the day. Getting their help to make the schedule means they are more likely to follow it.



- Eating together can reduce isolation
- Pledge to only talk about issues that support each other and avoid criticizing or being un-kind



- Find a place in the home where children can complete some learning every day
- Give children a specific task to do to help the family every day



- Designate a time every day for children and teens to talk to their friends, get outside and walk, run or move
- Make time for the family to find joy in each other with telling stories, playing games, singing or other healthy activities

*Explanation:* Having a routine of a structured and predictable events each day is important for you to feel a sense of power and control in your life; a predictable schedule also makes children feel safe and in control. As the figure shows, there are typical activities that happen every day in family life. When a family can eat meals together at similar times each day and can have conversations that support one another, this mealtime can serve as a valuable drug use prevention strategy.

Children of all ages need a place that is safe and secure for them to learn and study every day. Children can also feel pride and a sense of purpose when they are asked to do activities for the family that help contribute to the home functioning (e.g., sweeping the floor, helping with food preparation); however, care needs to be taken to not over-burden children with duties that they are not yet ready to handle at their age. Finally, families that are free of substance use are intentional about how they spend time together. They enjoy times of exercise – like walks outside- and also enjoy socializing together with games, songs or reading stories together. Making a schedule that you post for your family with symbols about times and activities can be helpful. Putting the schedule on a calendar and marking on the calendar the times you keep your schedule can be fun to do together as a family too.

**3. Practice being emotionally available to your children every day.**

Children crave their parent/caregiver's positive attention. Caregiving is MUCH MORE than giving a child food, clothing and shelter. They

need your emotional presence and attention. Set aside 20 minutes every day to:

- a. **Turn off your phone, TV, or other screens**
- b. **Listen to them, look at them and give them your full attention**
- c. **Have fun with your children, say positive things about them**

*Explanation:* Often some parents/caregivers will say that they think that providing food, clothing and shelter for their child is being a good parent/caregiver. While these things are essential for parenting/caregiving, there are more things parents/caregivers need to do to help their children thrive physically and mentally. Children need a parent/caregiver's positive, warm and nurturing attention. Being emotionally available requires us to pay

close attention to the emotional world of our children. We need to respond to them compassionately. In fact, *just as money is the currency of our economy, attention is the currency of our relationships.* Why is being emotionally available to your children so important? Because it is one of the most important best practices that a parent can do to raise competent, confident children and we all want our children to be happy and successful in life!

## #2 Tip Sheet

### A Specialized COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery

Anyone can be infected with COVID-19. It is important to know the facts about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself and your children.

The following facts matter to those who are in recovery from substance use disorder:

- There is no evidence that any substance use protects us from COVID-19. In fact, substance use can hurt your body's ability to fight viruses and infections. That means that people with substance use disorders are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 infection.
- Substance use can increase your risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection through shared objects (e.g. tableware, waterpipes for smoking, and syringes), and neglecting health protective measures like hand hygiene, wearing masks and physical distancing.
- If your body is not healthy, substance use can also result in worse outcomes from COVID-19. For example, smoking and inhaling substances can reduce lung function and increase vulnerability to infections. People who use or have used substances likely to have a higher prevalence of co-morbid health conditions (e.g. mental disorders, HIV, TB, hepatitis, cardiovascular, liver, kidney diseases) and often share other risk factors, such as under/malnutrition, physical inactivity, alcohol and tobacco use that can make outcomes from illnesses worse.
- Substance use is an ineffective mechanism to deal with fear, anxiety, boredom and/or social isolation. Substance use will only make life and feelings harder to deal with over time.

For those who take medicines for substance use disorders, it is important to have continued access to such medications. Ask your treatment provider if the following options are possible:

- Providing take-home medication

for longer periods

- Prescribing extended-release formulations alongside additional psychosocial support
- A "doorstep" delivery of medications

Share facts about COVID-19 that are appropriate for your children:

**Define it.** COVID-19 is caused by a germ (virus) that can make the body sick with a cough, fever and trouble taking deep breaths. Children who COVID-19 may not feel sick or may have mild symptoms such as those of a cold.

**Explain how it spreads.** COVID-19 enters people's bodies when it's on their hands and they touch their mouth, nose, or eyes. A virus is so tiny that you can't see it. If someone with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes on you, then that also can spread the virus.

**Take steps to stay safe.** Frequent and proper hand-washing. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or bent elbow. Clean and disinfect frequently touched items and surfaces around the house. Avoid close contact with people outside of home, even if they don't appear to be sick. Pretend there's a bike between you and the person you're standing near, keeping about 6 feet apart from each other. Instead of giving high fives, fist bumps, or hugs to people outside your family, give smiles and waves to say hello.

**Let children talk and ask questions and express fears. Listen and give them time and space to be children.**

**We can all prevent COVID-19 infection with:**

The infographic is enclosed in a red rounded rectangle. At the top left is a red circle with a white slash over a green virus icon. Below this are five icons with labels: 1. Handwashing: An icon of hands being washed under a faucet with a '20 SEC' timer. 2. Cleaning/disinfecting surfaces: An icon of a spray bottle and a hand. 3. Respiratory hygiene: An icon of a person wearing a face mask. 4. Physical distancing: An icon of two people standing apart with a dotted line between them. 5. Ensuring access to naloxone: An icon of a syringe and a vial.

handwashing

cleaning/  
disinfecting surfaces

respiratory hygiene

physical distancing

Considering possible misleading symptoms (amphetamine-related hyperthermia/being afebrile) due to misuse of medications, when assessing for COVID-19 symptoms among people who use drugs.

Ensuring access to naloxone and the knowledge of how to administer it

## #2 Tip Sheet Explanation

### A Specialized COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery

Anyone can be infected with COVID-19. It is important to know the facts about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself and your children.

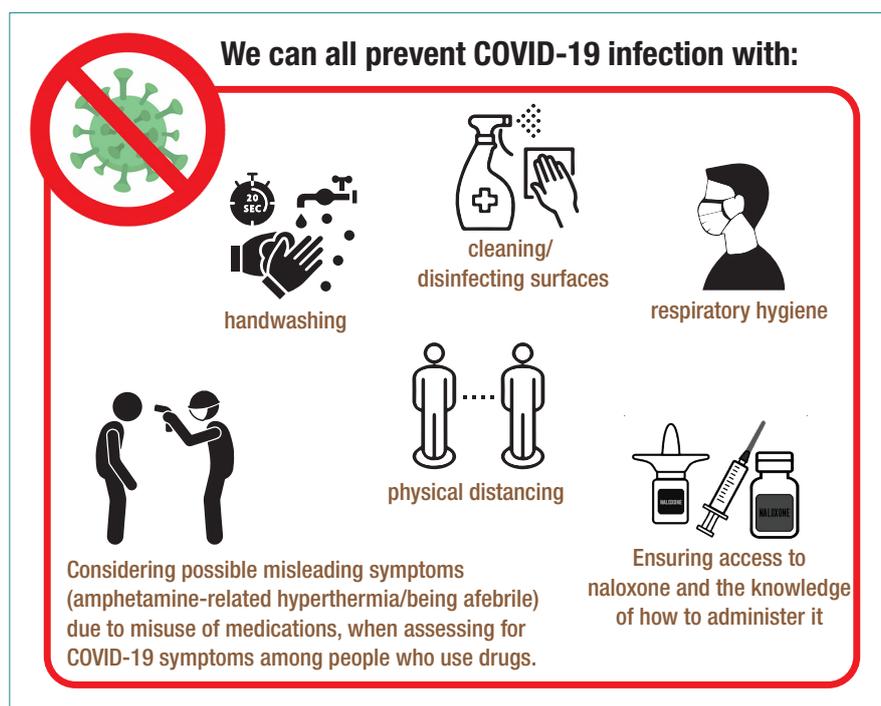
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- Substance use can increase your risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection through shared objects (e.g. tableware, waterpipes for smoking, and syringes), and neglecting health protective measures like hand hygiene, wearing masks and physical distancing.
- If your body is not healthy, substance use can also result in worse outcomes from COVID-19. For example, smoking and inhaling substances can reduce lung function and increase vulnerability to infections. People who use or have used substances are likely to have a higher prevalence of

co-morbid health conditions (e.g. mental disorders, HIV, TB, hepatitis, cardiovascular, liver, kidney diseases) and often share other risk factors, such as under/malnutrition, physical inactivity, alcohol and tobacco use that can make outcomes from illnesses worse.

- Substance use is an ineffective mechanism to deal with fear, anxiety, boredom and/or social isolation. Substance use will only make life and feelings harder to deal with over time.

*Explanation:* The point of these statements is to provide parents/caregivers with accurate, fact-based information so that they have the information needed to protect themselves, their children, and everyone they meet. Medical science is still learning about the short and long-term effects of having COVID-19. Medical science is also learning about how COVID-19 is transmitted. The best ways to make sure you and others you meet every day are safe are shown in the figure. Make sure to wash your hands often, wear a mask and stay more than a bicycle distance away from others who you do not live with. Because COVID-19 seems to harm breathing, doing everything you can to keep your lungs and the lungs of your children healthy is very important for health. For those who use opioids (like heroin, opium), it is important to have naloxone close by and know how to inject it or spray it up the person's nose to reverse an opioid overdose.



For instructions about how to give naloxone, see <https://health.ri.gov/materialbyothers/NaloxoneAdministrationSteps.pdf>

**For those who take medicines for substance use disorders, it is important to have continued access to such medications. Ask your treatment provider if the following options are possible:**

- Providing take-home medication for longer periods
- Prescribing extended-release formulations alongside additional psychosocial support
- A “doorstep” delivery of medications

*Explanation:* Talk with your health care provider about the medications you and/or your children need and find out the best ways to continue to receive those medications. In some places, pharmacy services will deliver medications to homes. It may also be possible to get more medication allotted by your full prescription during a single refill to avoid having to go to the pharmacy as often to reduce everyone’s chance of getting COVID-19.

**Share facts about COVID-19 that are appropriate for your children:**

**Define it.** COVID-19 is caused by a germ (virus) that can make the body sick with a cough, fever and trouble taking deep breaths. Children who have COVID-19 may not feel sick or may have mild symptoms such as those of a cold.

**Explain how it spreads.** COVID-19 enters people’s bodies when it’s on their hands and they touch their mouth, nose, or eyes. A virus is so tiny that you can’t see it. If someone with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes on you, then that also can spread the virus.

**Take steps to stay safe.** Frequent and proper hand-washing. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or bent elbow. Clean and disinfect frequently touched items and surfaces around the house. Avoid close contact with people outside of home, even if they don’t appear to be sick. Pretend there’s a bike between you and the person you’re standing near, keeping about 6 feet apart from each other. Instead of giving high fives, fist bumps, or hugs to people outside your family, give smiles and waves to say hello.

*Explanation:* It is important to talk to your children about the accurate facts about COVID-19. Children are hearing things and they pick up on what adults in their lives are saying about the virus and how adults in their lives are responding to the pandemic. In addition to talking to your children about COVID-19, modeling hand washing, mask wearing and staying more than a bicycle distance apart from those you do not live with is important for you to practice so that children know and practice how to stay safe too. You teach your children through your actions more than your words.

### #3 Tip Sheet

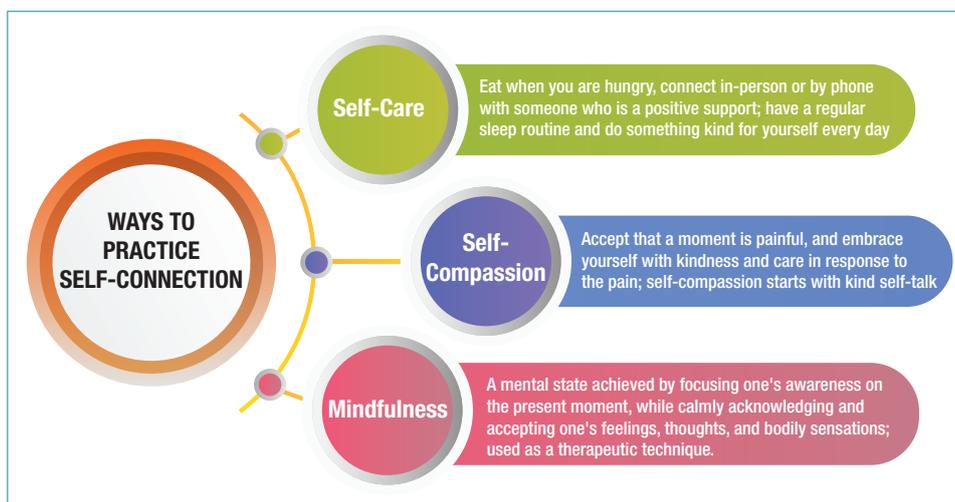
## Caring for a Child 0-3 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising a child from infancy to 3-years-old need help and support.

**When parents in recovery are parenting a 0-3 year-old child, practicing self-connection can be challenging.**

**A key part of self-connection is self-care.** That means monitoring yourself to make sure you are eating enough, sleeping enough, and talking about your emotions (see #2 Tip sheet for more information).

**Another key to self-connection is practicing self-compassion.** Practicing self-compassion helps reduce stress and increases warmth toward others. Rather than talking negatively to yourself when you make a mistake, offer yourself a little kindness. Doing this every day will help you to be patient and kind towards yourself and towards the children you are caring for as well.



**When parents/caregivers feel big emotions, children can too. Simple mindfulness activities can help everyone return to calm.** Mindfulness is noticing what's going on outside and inside of us with "accepting kindness." Mindfulness exercises below help both parent/caregiver and child to experience calm connection.

### Mindfulness with Infants = Pleasure Gazing

1. Start by taking a few deep breaths and notice how your body feels.
2. Look toward your baby with kindness and curiosity. You might ask their permission to begin this interaction, notice if they show any signs of interest or engagement.
3. Start by using your eyes. Gaze at your baby—what do you see? Use your eyes to look closely at the features of their face with a gentle smile. What are the different colors you see? What is the exact shape of their smile? Look at their fingers and toes, notice small things you haven't noticed before. Go slowly, feature by feature. Notice the warm connected feelings that may arise as you pay close attention to your baby.
4. Take a few deep breaths in and out and notice how you are feeling now.

### Mindfulness with a 1-3 year-old child =

**Balloon Breathing.** Breathing and movement work together to calm your body and mind. You start the breathing and show your child how to copy you.

1. Place both hands on top of your head.
2. Begin to breathe in and out slowly. As you inhale, raise your arms above your head, like you are blowing up a balloon. When your lungs are full of air, your arms should look like a big, round balloon on top of your head.
3. As you exhale, slowly bring your hands toward your head. Do your best to match the timing of your inhale with raising your arms up and the timing of your exhale with bringing your arms back down.
4. Try to deepen your breath with each inhale as you're able.
5. Continue with this breath and arm movement 2-4 more times.
6. On the last breath, press your lips together and blow the air out, making a silly sound like a horse.

**Following these tips will help your recovery and your children to grow up mentally and physically healthy!**

### #3 Tip Sheet Explanation

## Caring for A Child 0-3 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

When parenting 0-3 year-old children in recovery it can be especially challenging to practice self-connection.

*Explanation:* Self-connection is the process of being in touch with the worthiness and wholeness of yourself regardless of the form of experience you are having. These forms could be feelings, thoughts, expectations, beliefs, or attitudes. Often parents/caregivers focus on the child or even the stress of life with a new child and forget about the need for self-connection. As the figure shows, there are three ways to practice self-connection. There may be more ways, but these three are described here. Self-care, self-compassion and mindfulness.

Self-care is not the same as self-indulgence or being selfish. Self-care means taking care of yourself so that you can be healthy, you can be well, you can do your job, you can help and care for others, and you can do all the things you need to and want to accomplish in a day.

Compassion is the ability to show empathy, love, and concern to people who are in difficulty. Self-compassion is the ability to direct these same emotions within, and accept oneself, even in a time of failure.

Mindfulness is an important part of self-care as it helps people be "here and now." Mindfulness is being aware of oneself without judging our feelings, the thoughts we say to ourselves, or what we may be feeling physically in our body.

When parents/caregivers feel big emotions, children can too. Simple mindfulness activities can help everyone return to calm. Mindfulness is noticing what's going on outside and inside of us with "accepting kindness." Mindfulness exercises below help both parent/caregiver and child to experience calm connection.

### Mindfulness with Infants = Pleasure Gazing

1. Start by taking a few deep breaths and notice how your body feels.
2. Look toward your baby with kindness and curiosity. You might ask their permission to begin this interaction, notice if they show any signs of interest or engagement.
3. Start by using your eyes. Gaze at your baby—what do you see? Use your eyes to look closely at the features of their face with a gentle smile. What are the different colors you see? What is the exact shape of their smile? Look at their fingers and toes, notice small things you haven't noticed before. Go slowly, feature by feature. Notice the warm connected feelings that may arise as you pay close attention to your baby.
4. Take a few deep breaths in and out and notice how you are feeling now.

*Explanation:* Deep breathing is a great way to restore calm when we are feeling stressed. Looking toward your baby with kindness and curiosity allows you to center yourself and come to the present moment. Asking permission, even though a baby cannot respond in words, allows a positive interaction from the very start. If a baby is fussy or upset, that is a sign the baby is not giving permission now to do this activity. As you look at your baby, notice the shape and curve of each feature of your

baby. Notice the colors and contrast of colors, how many colors do you count? What smells does your baby have? What sounds do you hear? How do you feel? What makes you feel connected to your child? Notice your breath. Take a few more deep breaths to feel present and calm.



**Mindfulness with 1-3 year-old children = Balloon Breathing.** Breathing and movement work together to calm your body and mind. You start the breathing and show your child how to copy you.

1. Place both hands on top of your head.
2. Begin to breathe in and out slowly. As you inhale, raise your arms above your head, like you are blowing up a balloon. When your lungs are full of air, your arms should look like a big, round balloon on top of your head.
3. As you exhale, slowly bring your hands toward your head. Do your best to match the timing of your inhale with raising your arms up and the timing of your exhale with bringing your arms back down.
4. Try to deepen your breath with each inhale as you're able.

5. Continue with this breath and arm movement 2-4 more times.
6. On the last breath, press your lips together and blow the air out, making a silly sound like a horse.

*Explanation:* Balloon breathing can be fun! It is a great way to spend time with your child and model ways to be calm and centered. Being calm and centered allows you and your child to feel better and have mental clarity to make measured decisions. Ask your child to join you in a fun game. Consider telling them what you are going to do together and that breathing deeply can make us feel better. Don't be afraid to be fun and silly.

*Explanation of Developmental Markers:* The chart shows some signs to look for to know how your child is developing compared to other typically developing children.

Ages	Physical and Linguistic	Emotional	Social
Birth one month	5-8 feedings a day. Sleeps 20 hours per day. Makes basic distinctions with 5 senses as well as temperature and perception of pain.	Generalized Tension	Helpless Asocial Fed by mother
2-3 months	Can sense color, visual and oral exploration. Cries, coos, and grunts. Gains control of eye muscles, lifts head when laying on stomach.	Expresses delight and distress	Smiles at faces, visually fixates on a face, may be soothed by rocking
4 to 6 Months	Can localize sounds. Babbles, makes most vowels and around half of consonants. Gains control of head and arm movements, purposive grasping, rolls over Feeds 3-5 times a day	Enjoys being cuddled	Recognizes mother, distinguishes between familiar people and strangers
7 to 9 Months	Gains control of core and hands, can sit without support Starts crawling	Specific emotional attachment to mother	Protests separation from mother. Enjoys "peek-a-boo"
10 to 1 year	Gains control of legs and feet, apposition of thumb and fore-finger. Stands. Says first words, responds to simple commands Eats 3 meals and 2 snacks, sleeps 12 hours and naps	Shows anger, fear of strangers, curiosity, and exploration	Responds to name. waves goodbye understands "no", plays pat-a-cake. Gives and takes objects
1 year to 18 months	Creeps up stairs, walks for 10-20 minutes, makes simple lines with crayons. Shows dependent behavior Repeats a few words Feeds self	Very upset when separated from caregiver/parent, fear of bath	Follows limited commands
1.5 to 2 years	Runs, kicks ball, builds with blocks, controls bowels and bladder. Vocabulary of over 200 words	Temper tantrums start	Resentment of new baby. Does opposite of what they are told
2 to 3 years	Starts to use short sentences, controls and explores language. May stutter briefly. Shows emotions on face. Uses "I", "me", "you."	Fear of separation. Develops anger and humor	Enjoys other children Negativism, resists demand

Sometimes toddler children can be difficult. Part of the reason why two-year-olds can be challenging is because they are stuck. They are no longer babies yet still have a hard time communicating well. When they get very upset, it is difficult to reason with a two-year-old. Before your child reaches this stage, decide how are going to act the first time your child throws a tantrum because they didn't get their way. Tell them directly no hitting, no biting, no whining or whatever they're doing which you deem is not acceptable behavior. It is critically important that you are consistent in how you handle that infraction each and every time.

It helps to plan your daily activities around the child's routine. This means avoiding trips out of the home when it is too close to their naptime. It also means being sure you have a snack with you in case they get hungry while you are out and about. By avoiding trips outside the house when you know your child will be grumpy you can avoid a good deal of problems. Many two-year-olds don't like change.

- If this describes your child, try to let them know ahead of time what is going to happen.
- Tell them 10 or 15 minutes before you have to go someplace so they can start transitioning from one activity to another. Acknowledge their feelings of frustration, anger or sadness.

- Explain that feelings are normal but that acting in a way which will hurt others is not. Help them find the words they need to express themselves.
- Hold them, tell them a joke or speak to them in a soft voice to soothe them.
- Understand your toddler's abilities.
- Recognize they are growing up and they are able to do things they couldn't in the past.
- Give them activities which will allow them to show off what they can do.
- Make a big deal out of their putting their clothes in their dresser or helping you set the table.
- Find things they can do which will give them a reason to shine and for you to be proud of their achievements.

## #4 Tip Sheet

### Caring for a Child 4-7 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising a four to seven-year-old need help and support.

Support starts with your recovery. Recovery's foundation is connection. That means connection with self, others and a higher power.

Connection with self when parenting means knowing your feelings.

**To Stay in Recovery, Avoid HALT which means getting too:**

- Hungry
- Angry
- Lonely
- Tired



**HALT is an important acronym to remember to stay on the recovery path.**

For people in recovery, these HALT feelings can trigger a return to drug use. It only takes 30 seconds a few times a day to scan your mind and body to see if you are feeling hungry, angry, lonely, and/or tired. If you are feeling any of those things, ask yourself what you can do to reduce that feeling? Perhaps it is

getting something to eat or drink, identifying the reason for anger, planning when you can rest and sleep next, or connecting with another person/asking for help with an issue. Making a plan for what to do when you feel hungry, angry, lonely and/or tired before you get that way helps people stay in recovery. The plan can be pictures or written down.

**Staying at home all the time for safety is hard on you and your children. Here are six simple mindfulness tools that you and your young children can practice successfully:**

1. **Notice five things.** Consciously noticing the world around you through your five senses brings you back to the present, especially when you're overwhelmed by stress. You can practice noticing five things you see, hear or feel through your fingertips to help you be present.
2. **Take 10 breaths.** Practicing mindful breathing is a simple and effective way to help children calm their bodies and be present. Try taking 10 deep breaths together. Ask your child to close her eyes or look down at the floor and put her hand on her belly. Ask her to breath in so deeply that the air fills her belly. Show her how to breathe out slowly. If 10 breaths are too many, start with five and work your way up together with practice.
3. **Draw your emotions.** Young children sometimes have difficulty naming their feelings. Drawing emotions can be a great way for a child to pay attention to what he's feeling at a given moment, and express it without words. Sit down together and ask him to close his eyes and think about how he's feeling. You might want to offer some words to give him ideas (happy, disappointed, silly, scared, angry, etc.) You can draw a picture of how you are feeling. If he feels like naming his emotion, you can write the word on his picture if he likes.
4. **Play Together.** Make Believe – Act out a storybook, make up a story together, collect rocks, or watch bugs. The point is to be together focused on each other and to find joy in the moment.

**Following these tips will help your recovery and your children to grow up mentally and physically healthy!**

## #4 Tip Sheet Explanation

### Caring for A Child 4-7 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising four to seven-year-olds need help and support.

Support starts with your recovery. Recovery's foundation is connection. That means connection with self, others and a higher power.

Connection with self when parenting means knowing your feelings.

#### To Stay In Recovery, Avoid Getting too:

- Hungry
- Angry
- Tired
- Lonely

#### HALT is an important acronym to remember to stay on the recovery path.

For people in recovery, these HALT feelings can be triggering a return to drug use. It only takes 30 seconds a few times a day to scan your mind and body to see if you are feeling hungry, angry, tired and/or lonely. If you are feeling any of those things, ask yourself what you can do to reduce that feeling? Is it getting something to eat or drink, identifying the reason for anger, planning when you can rest and sleep next or connecting with another person/asking for help with an issue? Making a plan for what to do when you feel hungry, angry, tired and/or lonely before you get that way helps people stay in recovery. The plan can be pictures or written down.

*Explanation:* It is important to recognize that you need to focus on your recovery first and to do that you need to keep yourself in balance. It is important to check yourself every hour during the time when you are awake to make sure you are not having any HALT feelings. Being hungry,

angry, tired or lonely can set off a craving for substances and that can upset your whole day. Teaching your child to stay in balance and practice HALT is helpful to create a recovery tool for the whole family to use.

#### Staying at home all the time for safety is hard on you and your children. Here are six simple mindfulness tools that you and your young children can practice successfully:

1. **Notice five things.** Consciously noticing the world around you through your five senses brings you back to the present, especially when you're overwhelmed by stress. You can practice noticing five things you see, hear or feel through your fingertips to help you be present.

2. **Take 10 breaths.** Practicing mindful breathing is a simple and effective way to help children calm their bodies and be present. Try taking 10 deep breaths together. Ask your child to close her eyes or look down at the floor and put her hand on her belly.

Ask her to breath in so deeply that the air fills her belly. Show her how to breathe out slowly. If 10 breaths are too many, start with five and work your way up together with practice.

3. **Draw your emotions.** Young children sometimes have difficulty naming their feelings. Drawing emotions can be a great way for a child to pay attention to what he's feeling at a given moment, and express it without words. Sit down together and ask him to close his eyes and think about how he's feeling. You might want to offer some words to give him ideas (happy, disappointed, silly, scared, angry, etc.) You can draw how you are feeling. If he feels like naming his emotion, you can write the word on his picture if he likes.

4. **Play Together.** Make Believe – Act out a storybook, make up a story together, collect rocks, or watch bugs. The point is to be together focused on each other and to find joy in the moment.



*Explanation:* You will notice that many of the tip sheets focus on mindfulness. Mindfulness helps you stay in the present, deal with stressful situations and be in a mindset to respond and not react impulsively to any person or situation. These four ideas are examples of ways to bond and spend fun interactive time with your children, to change your thoughts and find your moments of joy in life. Finding those moments of joy can change your life for the better.

*Explanation of Developmental Markers:* Preschoolers are emerging from toddlerhood to a world of exploration and formal learning.

Most have started or will start preschool or prekindergarten and complete this period of development by entering formal school, either kindergarten or first grade.

Preschoolers are open to learning numbers and letters and are beginning reading and simple math. This is also a critical period for music. They are also improving their gross motor and fine motor skills which gets them interested in art, crafts, and all kinds of ride-on toys (wagons, scooters, bikes, etc.). By the end of this developmental period, children are often interested in learning early sports skills and participating in organized sports.

The most important mode of learning during this period is playing. Make believe play of all kinds is attractive and fosters the development of language, socialization, and creativity.

Interest in exploring their environment promotes an early interest in science. They also like to build things out of items around the house.

*Think about setting limits.* Limits are one form of discipline and it's helpful to know the importance of setting limits for preschoolers. Parents/caregivers often set limits for their children, not only for disciplinary reasons, but also to help keep their children safe.

- It is helpful to know how to set limits, how to enforce the limits once they're set, and what consequences to use if the limits are ignored.
- Limits may be used to help your preschooler learn what is acceptable and what is not, so they can learn self-control.
- Young children have a tendency to want what they want when they want it, so you may have some challenges in store for you. Don't give up – you can do this. Be ready to tell your child "no" quite often during the process. Try to explain why they cannot do something rather than just telling them no, for example: "You can't do this today because it's raining, but perhaps you can do this instead." Give them an option when you tell them no. Why are limits important? Limits actually help your preschooler feel like you care, especially when you share with them the reason why the limit is being set.

Age	Physical and Linguistic	Emotional	Social
3 to 4 years old	Stands on one leg, jumps, draws simple shapes. Uses "we"  Self-sufficient in many routines. Pleasure in genital manipulation. practices sex-role activities. Uses "we"	Romantic attachment to opposite sex parent, jealousy of same-sex parent  Fears the dark and injury	Gives orders, insists on routine.  Likes to share, cooperative play with other children, Intense curiosity & interest in other children's bodies. Imaginary friend.
4 to 5	Mature motor control, dresses self, copies complex shapes, adult speech sounds, basic gamer, tells stories, 2,00 word vocabulary	Develops responsibility, guilt, and pride	Prefers to play with other children, becomes competitive
6 to 7	Should have mastered the sounds of language  Should handle opposite analogies easily: girl-boy, man-woman, flies-swims, short-long etc. Should be able to tell time to quarter hour	Desires support and approval  Asks permission and follows instructions.	Likes to work and play with others. Prefers friends own age; usually own sex. Has a strong desire to please. Is proud of and likes to assist parents  Engages in elaborate and imaginative role play situations

- They will also feel more secure even though the limit isn't enjoyable. Give them fair warning if you expect them to stop doing something since some children have problems with abrupt changes. Know what you expect out of your preschooler, and agree upon those things as parents and partners, before you tell your child. It's also helpful to know what your child is able to do and what they're not able to do yet.
- Learning how to discipline effectively and encourage co-operation is also helpful. When you set a limit, no matter what the limit is, it's important to be consistent when reinforcing the limit. If you tell your preschooler they have a time limit to finish what they're doing, be sure to stop what you're doing and enforce the time limit when the time comes. Following through is as important as setting the limit in the first place.
- By being consistent with your limits, your child learns they can trust you to do what you say. Try not to set too many limits at one time.
- Your child needs to be able to achieve success with following one limit before moving on to another. You may repeat yourself during the training process, but the results will be worth it in the future. Pay attention to how the limits you set are affecting your preschooler.
- You know the importance of setting limits for preschoolers, but you don't want to crush their spirit in the process. Be sure they know you love them even though you have to establish limits.

## #5 Tip Sheet

### Caring for a Child 8-10 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising a child 8-10 years-old need help and support.

**You need to keep your recovery front and center. You need to model reliance for your children.**

1. Focus on what you can control– including your thoughts, behaviors.
2. Remember that you are resilient, and so is humankind.
3. Do what you can to reduce your risk; take comfort that you are caring for yourself and others.
4. Use technology to connect with others frequently.
5. Look for the good stuff; the helpers, time with family, and opportunities to pull together. Write down three things you are grateful for each day.
6. Limit exposure to news/social media updates and use reputable sources of news.
7. Model peaceful behavior for those around you. Remember everyone experiences stress in different ways.
8. Don't let fear influence your decisions.
9. Be gentle with yourself and others.
10. Create a regular routine, especially for children and work from home.
11. Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routines to help your immune system and mental health.
12. Spend time in nature.
13. Reflect on your reactions. Those who experienced trauma may be triggered by feelings of powerlessness. Understanding what you are feeling can help you consider how you want to respond to the triggers.
14. Practice meditation, yoga, or other mind-body techniques.

### Ways to Connect with your 8-10 year old during COVID-19

**Make time to listen to your children.** It is important to make time to talk with children when they are worried. They need to know they can express their feelings and ask questions, and that you can take the time to answer their questions.

**Be aware of what your children see and hear on television, the radio and online.**

Children often see and hear more than parents and caregivers realize. It is important to know what your child has seen or heard about COVID-19 so that you can discuss any worries or misinformation.

**Learn what your child already knows.** Children are curious by nature. Follow your child's lead by responding to questions he or she asks. This can help you to provide the age-appropriate information that he/she needs to keep healthy and safe, as well as appropriately informed.

**Maintain or implement routines.** Routines are important for children, especially when there is increased uncertainty and stress. As school and home routines are disrupted, children may have trouble regulating their emotions and behaviors. Try to maintain basic daily routines as you normally would, such as getting ready for the day and bedtime schedules. Create a basic loose structure for the day and week.

**Consider the following tips and tools:**

Have a goal or theme for the week. Spend some time outside each day for exercise and fresh air. Include time for fun and relaxation too.

Following these tips will help your recovery and your children to grow up mentally and physically healthy!

#### Keep Children Busy



##### Perform a puppet show or play

Kids can perform a play, with you as the audience. They can make puppets and act out a play.

##### Have an indoor picnic or tea party

Lay out a cloth on the floor and have a meal. Or, brew some tea and have a little tea time in cups with saucers, alongside crackers or bread for an afternoon treat.



##### Play shop or restaurant

A notepad, pencil, tray, and pretend-food are all a child needs to play restaurant.

## #5 Tip Sheet Explanation

### Caring for A Child 8-10 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising 8 -10 year-old children need help and support.

**You need to keep your recovery front and center. You need to model reliance for your children.**

1. Focus on what you can control– including your thoughts, behaviors.
2. Remember that you are resilient, and so is humankind.
3. Do what you can to reduce your risk; take comfort that you are caring for yourself and others.
4. Use technology to connect with others frequently.
5. Look for the good stuff; the helpers, time with family, and opportunities to pull together. Write down three things you are grateful for each day.
6. Limit exposure to news/social media updates and use reputable sources of news.
7. Model peaceful behavior for those around you. Remember everyone experiences stress in different ways.
8. Don't let fear influence your decisions.
9. Be gentle with yourself and others.
10. Create a regular routine, especially for children and work from home.
11. Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routines to help your immune system and mental health.
12. Spend time in nature.
13. Reflect on your reactions. Those who experienced trauma may be triggered by

feelings of powerlessness. Understanding what you are feeling can help you consider how you want to respond to the triggers.

14. Practice meditation, yoga, or other mind-body techniques.

*Explanation:* As noted before in previous tip sheets, to be your best self for your child, your recovery needs to come first. The fourteen tips above provide some examples of how to keep your recovery in the forefront. Keeping a routine is critical and so is learning to know your emotions and then not letting them rule your day. Emotions come and go like clouds and it is important to ride those emotions like you ride a wave or a bicycle.

#### Ways to Connect with your 8-10 year old during COVID-19

**Make time to listen to your children.** It is important to make time to talk with children when they are worried. They need to know they can express their feelings and ask questions, and that you can take the time to answer their questions.

#### Keep Children Busy



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**Learn what your child already knows.** Children are curious by nature. Follow your child's lead by responding to questions they ask. This can help them have the age-appropriate information that

they need to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as appropriately informed.

**Maintain or implement routines.** Routines are important for children, especially when there is increased uncertainty and stress. As school and home routines are disrupted, children may have trouble regulating their emotions and behaviors. Try to maintain basic daily routines as you normally would, such as getting ready for the day and bedtime schedules. Create a basic loose structure for the day and week.

**Consider the following tips and tools:**  
 Have a goal or theme for the week. Spend some time outside each day for exercise and fresh air. Include time for fun and relaxation too.

*Explanation:* School-age children need you now more than ever. They are curious about the world; they want to ask questions and they want to learn from you. During this time, it is important to find ways to spend quality time with your children doing things that they like to do. Pretend play requires only the imagination.

*Explanation of Developmental Markers:* At this age children becomes more settled and quieter. Children in this age worries about many things and maybe fearful of being alone. The child questions adults' ideas and may resents being told what to do. They may also want adult approval and love. Children at this stage desire independence and understand right from wrong. They may also offer excuses for wrongdoing. They show increased interest in friends and begin to have boy and girl friendships. At this age span, they desire group acceptance and may boast constantly. This is also the age range of telling secrets, whispering and giggling behaviors.

Age	Physical and Linguistic	Emotional	Social
8-10 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops more adult-like proportions</li> <li>Develops harder, larger bones</li> <li>Is sick less often</li> <li>Extremely active</li> <li>Starts developing secondary sex characteristics. May begin growth spurt. Develops interest in more specific motor skills such as bicycling, running and gymnastics. Engages in organized sports such as tennis, baseball, football, swimming, etc.</li> <li>Has well developed small muscles</li> <li>Refines writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Becomes less self-centered. Becomes excessively moody if puberty begins</li> <li>Quarrels more often</li> <li>Is sensitive and experiences hurt feelings in social situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gets along well with others</li> <li>Engages in group activities</li> <li>Enjoys making new friends</li> <li>Shows loyalty to peers Acts and dresses like peers. May be embarrassed to show affection to family members in front of peers</li> </ul>

## #6 Tip Sheet

### Caring for a Child 11-15 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising adolescents need help and support. As children become more independent, remember that they still need their parents/caregiver's love, attention and affection more than ever, even if they do not act like they need it or say that they need it.

How you deal with stress shows them how to deal with stress. Use this time to show your adolescent healthy ways to deal with stress, frustration, and disappointments that have come in overwhelming ways during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Mindfulness for you and your adolescent

##### Practice "radical acceptance."

That means we let ourselves sit with our emotions rather than fight against our emotions. Talk to your adolescent and say, "It is okay to feel anxious right now. It is okay to feel scared. It is okay to feel angry." Accepting our feelings allows us to move on and say, 'Okay, so now what needs to be done?'" **Acknowledge and honor the many losses of important events in the child's life.**

#### Breathing Meditation for you and your adolescent.

Do a mindful breathing exercise together as it often has a calming effect on the mind and body.

#### Tech Detox

Devices contribute to our stress. Invite your adolescent to take frequent breaks with you (minimum 20 minutes) when there's no phone, no TV, no electronics.

**Disconnecting from technology reconnects you to your experience!**

#### Breathing Calms and Focuses on the Now

- Sit in a comfortable posture
- Bring your attention to your breath, notice when you are breathing in... and when you are breathing out...
- Notice what your breath feels like in your **nose**, as the air goes in your nose, and then comes out over the lips...(pause)...
- Notice what your breath feels like in your **chest**, perhaps sensing the gentle expansion of the chest on the inhale, and the fall of the chest on the exhale...(pause)...
- See if you can focus on the actual physical sensations of breathing.... What does it feel like, right now, in your body as you breath?
- See if you can notice what your breath feels like in your **belly**, noticing how the belly expands as you inhale, and softens as you exhale...(pause)...
- For a few more moments, just try to let your attention rest on your breath, wherever YOU notice it most...



#### What else can you do?

**Avoid placing undue responsibilities on your child.** It is tempting, but harmful to give adolescents too much adult-like responsibility too early.

#### Recognize and address fear and stress.

Adolescents may express stress as excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration. Give adolescents many opportunities to talk about their fears and worries.

#### Encourage healthy habits.

Keeping a consistent sleep schedule is especially important to maintaining a positive mood and the ability to fulfill academic expectations. Keep moving with walks, stretching, etc.

You and your adolescent need to remember that stress is a given but being stressed-out is optional. Stress is a normal reaction in the body that helps the body work to handle a challenging task. It becomes a problem when we never allow that stress to be discharged.



People who expect stress are actually less stressed — when we get rid of the idea that things will always be easy and our day will generally go as planned, we are more prepared to handle the issues thrown at us.



Let them know their stress is an entirely normal reaction to a challenge. Stress is not their fault or something they've done wrong. There are many things they can do about it in order to feel better!



**Develop an attitude of gratitude during meals.** This is a perfect time to have positive connections and find joy in each other.

**Following these tips will help your recovery and your children to grow up mentally and physically healthy!**

## An Attitude of Gratitude

- Start a meal with gratitude
- Have a positive zone for mealtime
- Modeling patience, empathy, self-compassion and self-care



### Table Talk

**T**-turn the electronic off

**A**- ask open ended questions

**L**-listen to what each person says

**K**-kind and respectful to each other

## #6 Tip Sheet Explanation

### Caring for a Child 11-15 Years Old: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

For parents/caregivers in recovery from drug problems, COVID-19 can bring even more stress than for people who never experienced drug problems. That means that parents/caregivers in recovery who are raising adolescents need help and support. As children become more independent, remember that they still need their parents/caregiver's love, attention and affection more than ever, even if they do not act like they need it or say that they need it.

How you deal with stress shows them how to deal with stress. Use this time to show your adolescent healthy ways to deal with stress, frustration, and disappointments that have come in overwhelming ways during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Mindfulness for you and your adolescent

**Practice "radical acceptance."** That means we let ourselves sit with our emotions rather than fight against our emotions. Talk to your adolescent and say, "It is okay to feel anxious right now. It is okay to feel scared. It is okay to feel angry." Accepting our feelings allows us to move on and say, "Okay, so now what needs to be done?" **Acknowledge and honor the many losses of important events in the child's life.**

*Explanation:* Radical acceptance is defined as when you (1) stop fighting reality, (2) stop responding with impulsive or destructive

behaviors when things aren't going the way you want them to, and (3) let go of bitterness that may be keeping you trapped in a cycle of suffering. During COVID-19 teenagers have missed out on many important social and school events. Talk about those losses and acknowledge the pain and anger that comes with those losses.

*Explanation of the figure:* Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. Stress is a normal part of life. The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated, and ready to avoid danger. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between stressors. Talk to your teenager about stress and find ways to listen without trying to fix things all the time for them. Here are some other tips that you and your teenager can review to see if they may work for you. Learn and practice relaxation techniques; try meditation, yoga, or tai-chi. Below is an example of such a relaxation method.

- Exercise regularly. Your body can fight stress better when it is fit. Walk, do jumping jacks, and even if you cannot get outside, you can get physical activity in your home.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Set limits appropriately and say no to requests that would create excessive stress in your life.

You and your adolescent need to remember that stress is a given but being stressed-out is optional. Stress is a normal reaction in the body that helps the body work to handle a challenging task. It becomes a problem when we never allow that stress to be discharged.

People who expect stress are actually less stressed — when we get rid of the idea that things will always be easy and our day will generally go as planned, we are more prepared to handle the issues thrown at us.

Let them know their stress is an entirely normal reaction to a challenge. Stress is not their fault or something they've done wrong. There are many things they can do about it in order to feel better!

## Breathing Meditation for you and your adolescent.

Do a mindful breathing exercise together as it often has a calming effect on the mind and body.

expectations. Keep moving with walks, stretching, etc.

**Develop an attitude of gratitude during meals.** This is a perfect time to have positive connections and find joy in each other.

### Breathing Calms and Focuses on the Now

- Sit in a comfortable posture
- Bring your attention to your breath, notice when you are breathing in... and when you are breathing out...
- Notice what your breath feels like in your **nose**, as the air goes in your nose, and then comes out over the lips...(pause)...
- Notice what your breath feels like in your **chest**, perhaps sensing the gentle expansion of the chest on the inhale, and the fall of the chest on the exhale...(pause)...
- See if you can focus on the actual physical sensations of breathing.... What does it feel like, right now, in your body as you breath?
- See if you can notice what your breath feels like in your **belly**, noticing how the belly expands as you inhale, and softens as you exhale...(pause)...
- For a few more moments, just try to let your attention rest on your breath, wherever YOU notice it most...



*Explanation:* In terms of what else you can do, remember that teenagers need responsibility but not so much that they cannot have time to learn and enjoy social time with friends. Too much responsibility and giving them adult choices to make too often may create harm, resentment and can lead to the possibility of substance use. When you see your teenager change their sleeping routine or become very withdrawn or look less tidy and not taking care of their physical body, these are all signs that you need to be concerned. Having conversations

### Tech Detox

Devices contribute to our stress. Invite your adolescent to take frequent breaks with you (minimum 20 minutes) when there's no phone, no TV, no electronics. **Disconnecting from technology reconnects you to your experience!**

### What else can you do?

**Avoid placing undue responsibilities on your child.** It is tempting, but harmful to give adolescents too much adult-like responsibility too early.

### Recognize and address fear and stress.

Adolescents may express stress as excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration.

Give adolescents many opportunities to talk about their fears and worries.

### Encourage healthy habits.

Keeping a consistent sleep schedule is especially important to maintaining a positive mood and the ability to fulfill academic

or expressing empathetic statements such as, "I see you look worried/tired/stressed, what are you feeling?" or "I am here for you and care about you," or "What can I do to help you?" are ways to open conversations.

The attitude of gratitude at mealtime means that your meal as a family needs to be a time of positive connection. No fighting, arguing, yelling or saying hurtful things. One idea to have positive conversations is to go around the table and say three good things that have happened in your day. Each person at the table shares these good things. The other important note for positive mealtime is to have an electronic free meal- put away the phones

### An Attitude of Gratitude

- Start a meal with gratitude
- Have a positive zone for mealtime
- Modeling patience, empathy, self-compassion and self-care



#### Table Talk

- T**-turn the electronic off
- A**- ask open ended questions
- L**-listen to what each person says
- K**-kind and respectful to each other

etc. where they cannot be seen and turn off the TV. Maybe have a jar of open-ended questions that everyone can take turns drawing from to ask another person at the table. Examples of questions can be: what makes you happy? What is something that you are proud you have done? What is the best compliment you ever received? What would you like to hear from someone? Make sure that only one person talks at a time at the table and when everyone practices being kind to each other, respect will grow.

*Explanation of Developmental Markers:* For many parents/caregivers the teenage years present a challenge.

Middle School is not fondly remembered by most who attend. It is often fraught with scary body changes, bullying by peers and a new surge for independence. This leads to passive-aggressive behavior (“I’ll do it in a minute.”), self-consciousness (“What are you staring at?”) and self-doubt (“I’m not good at anything.”) and/or over-confidence (“Well, I thought I could do that.”) and of course moodiness (“Leave me alone.”).

High School is usually better for most. It is a time to begin defining one’s self and realistically contemplate the future.

Skill development is accelerated to prepare for college or job training programs, and talents are perfected.

Social skills are honed, and relationships take on more of a serious nature. Peer pressure is at its maximum influence, and in today’s teen society there are more tempting sidetracks than ever. During adolescence, kids need their parents more than ever.

Research shows that in a positive family environment, including positive mealtimes, fun family activities, open parent-child communication, and encouragement to participate in positive extracurricular activities, teens can navigate these years with relative ease.

Age	Physical and Linguistic	Emotional	Social
11-15 years old	<p>Rapid growth period Secondary sexual characteristics appear (grow body hair, increase perspiration and oil production in hair and skin)</p> <p>Girls – breast and hip development, the onset of menstruation. Boys – growth in testicles and penis, wet dreams, deepening of voice</p> <p>Tremendous physical growth: gain height and weight. Body Image; preoccupation with physical changes and critical of appearance</p> <p>Anxieties about secondary sexual characteristic changes; Peers used as a standard for normal</p> <p>The Speed and efficiency of thought increases, spatial working memory improves, emotional regulation becomes greater, planning and problem-solving skills increase, and scientific reasoning and ability to understand one’s own thinking develops</p>	<p>Struggle with a sense of identity; Feel awkward about one’s self and one’s body; worry about being normal. Realize that parents are not perfect; increased conflict with parents. Things of childhood rejected. Argumentative and disobedient. Peer Group Serves a developmental purpose</p> <p>Intense friendship with same-sex</p>	<p>Increased influence of peer group</p> <p>Desire for independence. The tendency to return to “childish” behavior, particularly when stressed</p> <p>Moodiness</p> <p>Rule- and limit-testing. Greater interest in privacy. In seeking autonomy, may challenge authority, family, and become anti-parent; may experience loneliness and wide mood swings</p>

## #7 Tip Sheet

### Stay Safe and Violence-free: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

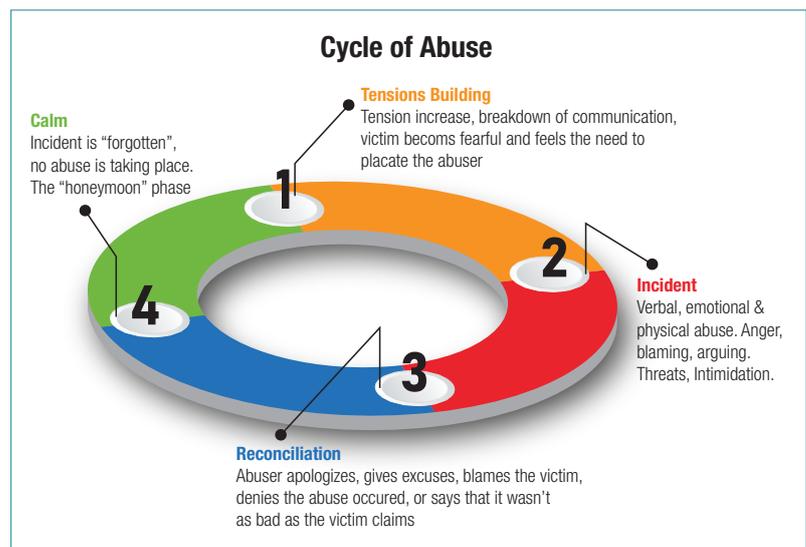
The COVID-19 pandemic has created stress in everyone's life. Those who are in recovery from substance use disorders may be more prone to stressful issues during this time. One way stress is expressed is in violence towards others. When people are confined at home, isolated from others, not able to work, facing financial problems, or not able to keep a normal routine, the chance for violence can increase.

Parents/caregivers need to keep themselves and their children safe from physical, emotional and sexual harms. If the **cycle of abuse** describes your relationship, consider the below ideas to help increase the safety for you and your child(ren).

- 1. Buddy System Code Word.** Identify at least two people that you can contact with a "code word" to let them know if you are in trouble. Plan in advance what they should do if you send them the code word.
- 2. "Safest Room."** Identify an area you can move to where there are no weapons and there are ways for you to leave such as a door or window to exit the house/apartment.
- 3. Planning with Children.** Some violence survivors create a "code word" with their children that means they should go to the "safest room" in the home that you have already decided upon.
- 4. Emergency Numbers.** If for some reason you are not able to make emergency calls, give children the safety number/s, if they are old enough.
- 5. Exit Plan.** In case you have to flee, create an exit plan ahead of time with someone who could support this need. Is there a trusted friend/relative with whom you can stay, if needed?
- 6. Supplies, Food & Medication.** Check your supplies and food. If you need food and do not have the money, check your local pantry, temple/church/mosque/etc., or other community organizations. Remember to keep your medication in the safest, easily

accessible location in case of emergency.

- 7. Emergency Bag.** Pack an emergency bag with an extra set clothes for you and your children, a pay-as-you-go cell phone, medications, copies of important documents, etc.
- 8. Important Documents.** Make copies or take pictures of your important documents for yourself and children and send them to a trusted friend or relative. Be mindful of sending anything via phone or computer as the abuser could be viewing your communications. Please use whatever method is safest for you.



- 9. Seeking Social Support.** With social distancing/quarantining, survivors can feel even more isolated, and abusers may use further isolation as a power and control tactic. Identify trusted friends, relatives or even online support groups where you can still connect virtually.
- 10. Creating a "Peaceful Space".** If you cannot leave your home, try to create a "peaceful space" for yourself in your home (if that is safe for you). You can draw pictures of a more peaceful place and put them on a wall to help you take an emotional break to visualize a more peaceful place. You can do this activity with your children. You can also write positive affirmations to remind yourself of your worth.
- 11. Holding Your Plan.** Consider keeping your safety plan in your phone or place where the abuser will not see it. If this is not safe, try to memorize your plan, focusing on memorizing at least one key emergency number on your list of resources.

## #7 Tip Sheet Explanation

### Stay Safe and Violence-free: Tips for Parents/Caregivers in Recovery During Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created stress in everyone's life. Those who are in recovery from substance use disorders may be more prone to stressful issues during this time. One way stress is expressed is in violence towards others. When people are confined at home, isolated from others, not able to work, facing financial problems, or not able to keep a normal routine, the chance for violence can increase.

**Explanation:**  
There is never a good excuse for violence. No one deserves to be threatened with harm or harmed. The Cycle of

Abuse figure helps those in violent relationships to understand what is happening. The Cycle of Abuse in the figure is defined by the ways in which an abusive partner keeps a target in a relationship, spanning subtle behaviors as well as physical, visible violence.

#### 1. Tension Building

This phase can last anywhere from minutes to weeks. In it, stress builds, and abusers may begin to feel wronged, ignored, or neglected. They may accuse, yell, demand and/or have unrealistic expectations, while the target feels they have to walk on eggshells, are afraid, and become anxious. Targets are likely already familiar with the cycle and believe making a small mistake will make the partner angry, so instead they opt to stay quiet or not do something. No matter what is said or done, however, it seems like the target is never right, and a small incident can create a difficult situation in seconds.

#### 2. Incident

At this stage, the target says or does something the abuser feels upset about or threatened

by, and the abuser attempts to dominate the target through verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. Targets may keep the incident a secret and not share what happened with others. In some cases, a target of abuse can end up in the hospital and may even lie to the medical personnel about the cause of their injuries.

#### 3. Reconciliation

At this point, the abuser might feel remorse or fear and try to initiate a reconciliation — this can entail them giving gifts or suggesting or doing something nice. They often promise

it will be the last time the abuse happens. The target experiences pain, humiliation, disrespect, and fear, and may be staying for financial reasons or because children are involved. The perpetrator stresses that they did not want to do what they did,

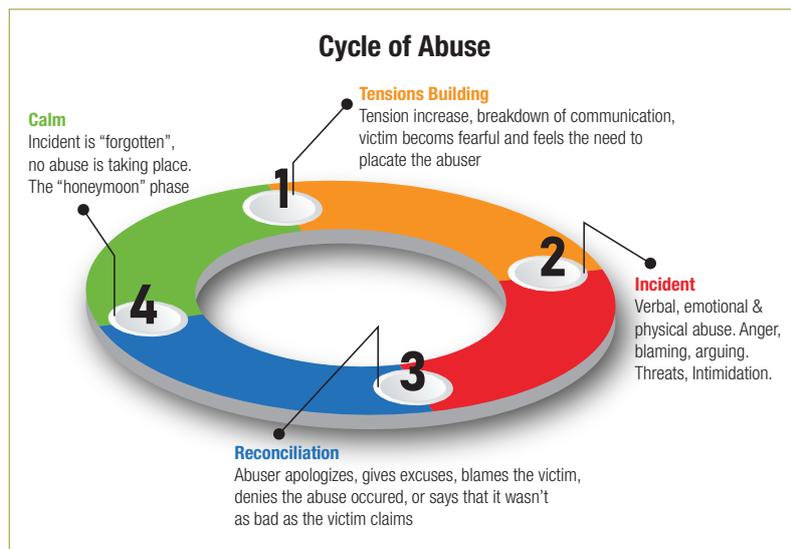
but the target made them because of their lack of understanding, wrong behavior, or because "they do not listen."

#### 4. Calm

Also known as the honeymoon stage, an abuser is kind, calm, and interested and may engage in counseling, as well as asking for forgiveness. The target may believe the abuser has changed and accept the apology. A perpetrator then starts to find little flaws or behaviors that they criticize in a passive-aggressive way and apologies become less sincere over time. Little by little the same behaviors begins to reappear and the cycle again returns to the tension building phase.

Parents/caregivers need to keep themselves and their children safe from physical, emotional and sexual harms. If the cycle of abuse describes your relationship, consider the below ideas to help increase the safety for you and your child(ren).

**1. Buddy System Code Word.** Identify at least two people that you can contact with a "code word" to let them know if you are in



trouble. Plan in advance what they should do if you send them the code word.

2. **“Safest Room.”** Identify an area you can move to where there are no weapons and there are ways for you to leave such as a door or window to exit the house/ apartment.
3. **Planning with Children.** Some violence survivors create a “code word” with their children that means they should go to the “safest room” in the home that you have already decided upon.
4. **Emergency Numbers.** If for some reason you are not able to make emergency calls, give children the safety number/s, if they are old enough.
5. **Exit Plan.** In case you have to flee, create an exit plan ahead of time with someone who could support this need. Is there a trusted friend/relative with whom you can stay, if needed?
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9. **Seeking Social Support.** With social distancing/quarantining, survivors can feel even more isolated, and abusers may use further isolation as a power and control tactic. Identify trusted friends, relatives or even online support groups where you can still connect virtually.
10. **Creating a “Peaceful Space”.** If you cannot leave your home, try to create a “peaceful space” for yourself in your home (if that

is safe for you). You can draw pictures of a more peaceful place and put them on a wall to help you take an emotional break to visualize a more peaceful place. You can do this activity with your children. You can also write positive affirmations to remind yourself of your worth.

11. **Holding Your Plan.** Consider keeping your safety plan in your phone or place where the abuser will not see it. If this is not safe, try to memorize your plan, focusing on memorizing at least one key emergency number on your list of resources.

*Explanation:* It can be helpful to create a safety plan. A safety plan is the specific steps you can take to reduce the risk of harm in unsafe situations with unsafe people in your life or home. Having a plan can empower you to make the safest decisions you can for your situation and for your children. As you make your plan, use a device that the abuser cannot control, hack, or have access to examine. Digital stalking is one way for abusers to try to exert power and control. Email and Instant/Text Messaging (IM) are not safe or confidential ways to talk to someone about the danger or abuse in your life. If possible, please call instead. If you use email or texting, please use a safer computer or phone and an account your abuser does not know about.

For more information- see [sanctuaryforfamilies.org/safety-planning-covid19](https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/safety-planning-covid19)

Other tips that can be helpful:

(Check to see if going outside is accessible and social distancing guidelines can be maintained, which means keeping a physical distance of 6 feet from other people)

- Going outside can give you a break from a tense situation.
- It can also remove you from and/or deescalate an unsafe situation or interaction.
- Take this time to ground yourself, call a social support, reach out to a hotline, or have a counseling session.
- You can also use this time to use safety apps such as Circle of 6 and/or grounding apps such as Calm.
- Create scheduled check-ins with people in your support network.

## CONCLUSION

Parents/Caregivers in all stages of recovery during COVID-19, as well as the substance use disorder professionals working with them, have multiple options for seeking more in-depth information on coping tools and strategies. Following are various links and resources for you to access organized by topic areas and organizations. Do not give up on yourself, your children or your journey of recovery! They are each a treasure to be nurtured and enjoyed.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Attachment disorders-education for parents on signs when children are regressing, normal signs of stress, other attachment issues  
[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Attachment-Disorders-085.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Attachment-Disorders-085.aspx)
- Stages of Development for each age range-what's normal, what to expect; how to manage, bond with and engage children at each stage  
<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-development/#gs.obl84x>
- Communication-listening, problem-solving, conflict resolution-how to prevent lashing out at children and others in the home; how to talk to children; discipline, not punishment  
<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/family-building/5-ways-to-improve-family-communication/#gs.oblae3>
- Parent-child exercises and strategies to build trust and connection caring for the mind and body and managing stress  
[https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/angry\\_child/stress/#gs.oblinr](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/angry_child/stress/#gs.oblinr)  
<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-activities/14-easy-relaxation-practices-to-share-with-your-children-and-teens/#gs.obllke>
- How to connect with a recovery network during Covid-19 isolation conditions; recovery strategies: what to do if you can't reach your sponsor, you feel like using, you can't get to a meeting;  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/virtual-recovery-resources.pdf>
- ✓ Narcotics Anonymous Worldwide Fellowship: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)
- ✓ Virtual Narcotics Anonymous Meetings: [www.virtual-na.org](http://www.virtual-na.org)
- ✓ Alcoholics Anonymous Worldwide Fellowship: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)
- ✓ Online Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings: [www.aa-intergroup.org](http://www.aa-intergroup.org)
- ✓ Online SMART Recovery Meetings: [www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)
- ✓ Online Women For Sobriety Meetings: [www.womenforsobriety.org](http://www.womenforsobriety.org)
- ✓ Online SOS Sobriety Meetings: [www.sossobriety.org](http://www.sossobriety.org)
- ✓ Online LifeRing Secular Recovery Meetings: [www.lifering.org](http://www.lifering.org)
- Exercises for recovery at home: recovery capital and wheel of life exercises adapted for Covid-19 conditions, recovery support literature, calling your network of support and what to say  
<https://sscouncil.org/2020/01/recovery-skills-and-tools-of-recovery-coping-skills/>
- Support strategies for coping with interpersonal violence, depression, and returns to substance use  
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm>
- Recovery resources, i.e., who to reach out to and call when  
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/overcoming-drug-addiction.htm>  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools-resources>
- For children using substances, caregivers can help them by having a conversation about substance use without blaming or shaming, encouraging healthy behaviors you want to see
- For more information on child development please go to: <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/#gs.oron89>
- For more information on safety planning please go to: <https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/safety-planning-covid19/>

### Useful Links to Relevant Organizations:

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)  
See UNODC's "Listen First Campaign to Help Children Grow Healthy and Safe" at: [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)
2. Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)  
See SAMHSA's "Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks" at: [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
3. Narcotics Anonymous Worldwide Fellowship: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)
4. Alcoholics Anonymous Worldwide Fellowship: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

