

Stress Management:

In this time, where there has been so many unplanned changes occurring within our nation and by extension within the entire world, levels of stress, anxiety and frustration can be on the rise.

In Trinidad and Tobago, our schools have been closed and parents with no support system have been advised to remain at home with their children. We were also advised it is not an extended vacation period and children should be engaged in learning. Parents/caregivers, however, can become overwhelmed in trying to meet all demands (meal planning and preparations, academic preparation and supervision, child-rearing, financial budgeting, etc.).

The question is “How do we (as parents/caregivers) cope with all the stressors around us and still function adequately?”

1. Take time to get organized: Create a **SIMPLE** Plan –
 - a. This would create structure.
 - b. Get your children involved in the planning- this would create ownership allowing for greater cooperation in executing/carry out the plan
 - c. A written plan would allow for monitoring – children know what is to happen when.
 - d. A simple plan would allow you to achieve the goals set out, leaving both you and the children feeling accomplished
2. Plan should include leisure/fun time (walks - *remember social distancing*, exercise, game/movie evening, story-telling, dancing, listening to music)
3. Be consistent - Plan should be followed as much as possible.
 - a. Be open to changes and adapt accordingly (N.B. being flexible is not a sign of weakness or failure).
4. Take time to teach your children – this is not just academics but life skills. For example:
 - Morals – saying “please”, “thank you”, “excuse me” and “I am sorry”, waiting your turn, following instructions etc.
 - Values – being kind to and respecting one another, recognizing they have purpose and they are special and loved, understand the family’s faith and belief system, having a positive attitude etc.
 - craft, cooking, washing, backyard gardening etc.
 - Current events – e.g. facts surrounding COVID -19 and their responsibility.
5. Take time to listen to your children – this is a very important factor.
 - a. Do not belittle their feelings or concerns
 - b. Correct misconceptions.
 - c. Treat what they are saying as important BECAUSE it is!

6. Have rest/sleep period scheduled into the plan (both children and adult). It is recommended that everyone rest at the **same** time.
7. Encourage teamwork – give the children opportunities to engage in task and feel accomplished. REMEMBER to **always** praise their efforts.

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