

# MIND YOUR HEALTH



## Mental Health Considerations During an Outbreak

### For Parents, Teachers and Caretakers of Children

#### **Express Yourself**

Help children find positive ways to express their negative emotions like fear and sadness. Every child has their own way of self-expression. Sometimes engaging the child in a creative activity like playing or drawing can help facilitate this process. Children feel relief if they can communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

#### **Talk About It**

Allow them to ask questions. Ask older children what they know about the outbreak. What are they hearing and seeing on social media? Try to watch news coverage with them. Limit access to electronics so they have time away from reminders about the outbreak. Don't let talking about the outbreak take over family or discussion time. Do not pressure youth to talk about it.

#### **Encourage Positive Activities**

Adults can help youth see the good that can come out of an outbreak. Heroic actions, families and friends who assist with response to the outbreak, people who take steps to prevent the spread of illness— like handwashing are examples. Children may better cope by helping others. They can write letters to senior citizens or those who have been sick or lost someone or organize a drive to collect medical supplies for healthcare workers.

#### **Role Model**

Model self-care, set routines, eat healthy meals, get enough sleep, exercise, and take deep breaths to handle stress. Although every parent may not be home and teachers may not be in person with students, adults can show youth how to take care of themselves. If you are in good physical and mental health you are more readily available to support the children you care about.

#### **Keep in Mind**

Youth may not remember to wash their hands for 20 seconds or keep their hands to themselves just because the stakes are higher. Depending on their age, stages of development and temperament, some youth will require more reassurance or more time to transition. Keep your expectations in check and lead them gently towards the resolution.

**Take care of your mental health - a healthy mind helps keep a healthy body**



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[www.bernardshealth.org](http://www.bernardshealth.org)

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