



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

RESOURCE DOCUMENT

FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AGES 0 -5

YMCA CHILDCARE RESOURCE SERVICE

 CAREGIVER RESILIENCE	 SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	 KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT	 SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE	 CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED
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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



The YMCA of San Diego County is dedicated to improving the quality of human life and to helping all people realize their fullest potential as children of God through the development of the spirit, mind and body.

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Disclaimer: The resources within this document are intended to support families and caregivers during the COVID-19 crisis. This document is not an endorsement of any particular entity, nor does it necessarily reflect or mirror the mission and vision of any one organization.

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Families may face new challenges as communities around the world respond to COVID-19. Caregivers may face more anxiety, uncertainty, economic pressure, or demands on their time. This stress can impact the harmony of the home, but it doesn't have to. Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. The five key protective factors (listed below) are attributes that serve as buffers, helping caregivers find resources, support, or coping strategies that allow them to care for children effectively, even under stress and adversity.



CAREGIVER RESILIENCE:

MANAGING STRESS AND FUNCTIONING WELL WHEN FACED WITH CHALLENGES, ADVERSITY AND TRAUMA.

"The only two things that need to be on a parent's to-do list right now are taking care of themselves and connecting with their children."

(Rebecca Parlakian, Zero to Three Senior Director)

Nurturing children during this stressful time is both important and difficult. Helping children understand their emotions and behaviors starts with you, the caregiver. The current times find many families balancing new tasks such as working from home, schooling at home, trying to find childcare, etc., all in the absence of supports that used to be there. There are a lot of unknown and potential anxieties that can lead to higher frustrations towards the ones you love the most. Practicing daily self-compassion and creating moments to connect your mind and body will help you find the resiliency and strength within to care for young ones. It is not selfish to prioritize your mental health; it is proven to strengthen the wellbeing of kids, families and caregivers.



HERE ARE A FEW STRATEGIES YOU CAN IMPLEMENT TODAY:

Take a few minutes every day, either by yourself or with your kids, to sit quietly and concentrate on mindful breathing. Examples are:

- **Box Breathing**
 - Close your eyes
 - Take 3 big, deep breaths
 - Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and hold for 4 seconds.
 - Repeat 4 times
 - As you breathe, try to follow your breath in and out. As thoughts come into your head, envision them floating out.

- **When you are feeling mad (adapted from zerotothree.org)**
 - Check your own stress level: Often a caregiver's stress level affects their kids. Ask yourself how stressed you are feeling and then try something to reduce it in the moment such as taking a deep breath, drinking water, standing outside and listening to birds for a few second, anything to help calm your sense.
 - Know your child's ages and stages: Does the behavior make sense for your child's age? If a two-year-old is struggling to share without support, remembering that they don't have that skill yet can help you find compassion and then respond with teaching versus anger.
 - Trouble spots of the day: If you are or your child has meltdowns during a specific time of day having resources ready beforehand can decrease stress levels. For example, if an afternoon snack is important to avoid getting "hangry," prioritize that part of the day.
 - A kid's point of view: Most behaviors mean your child is trying to tell you something. If you can imagine what your child is feeling and what the behavior is telling you setting limits and responding with kindness is much easier.
 - Perfection is not possible: It is ok to be a "good enough" parent. Every parent makes mistakes and it can all be turned into an opportunity for everyone to learn. Saying you are sorry and trying again teaches your child a valuable lesson about our emotions and provides a different type of opportunity to connect with your child.

- **Movement**
 - Take a few minutes at the beginning of the week to write out the type of movement you enjoy the most (running, yoga, walking, etc.).
 - Plan out 2-3 times per week that you can practice this movement

- **Journaling - respond to the writing prompts below alone or as a family:**
 - What are five things I am proud of right now?
 - What I am doing really well as a caregiver right now?
 - In the past 24 hours, what has brought me joy?
 - What is a realistic goal I can set for myself/my family for today, tomorrow or this week? What steps/actions do I need to take to accomplish this goal?

- **Take care of yourself—take walks—don't consume too much media. Pay attention to your body's need for sleep, nutrition, and exercise—stretching exercises, mindfulness.**
 - Daily Quarantine Questions:
 - What am I grateful for today?
 - Who am I checking in on, or connecting with today?
 - What expectations of "normal" am I letting go of today?
 - How am I getting outside today?
 - How am I moving my body today?
 - What beauty am I creating, cultivating, or inviting in today?
 - How am I nourishing my spirit today?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND TOOLS (COVID-19):

- [California Surgeon General's Playbook: Stress Relief during COVID-19 \(Adult\)](#)
- [California Surgeon General Playbook: Stress Relief during COVID-19 \(Kids\)](#)
- Zero to Three: [Importance of self-care for parents during Corona Virus](#)
- Zero to Three: [Tips for Families](#)
- CDC: [Advice for Prepping and Managing Stress and Anxiety](#) (plus other embedded resources):
- Be Strong Families: [Join a Parent Café online using Zoom](#)
- The Childmind Institute: [Supporting Families During COVID-19](#)

Free exercise program online (during Coronavirus)

- [Virtual Yoga Classes](#) (Core Power Yoga)
- [YMCA – virtual classes](#)

Other Articles/Video (COVID-Specific)

- California Association of Marriage & Family Therapy: [Video: Reducing Anxiety for you and your family during coronavirus](#)
- PBS.org: [How to Talk to your Kids about the Coronavirus](#)
- New York Times: [5 Ways to Help Teens Manage Anxiety About the Coronavirus](#)
- The Guardian: [The family lockdown guide: how to emotionally prepare for coronavirus quarantine](#)

Printable/Posters/Etc.

- [Help Us Stay Calm](#) – Bilingual strategies that help you and your child stay calm during challenging behaviors (Pyramid Model & University of Southern Florida)
- Be Strong Families: [100 ways to reduce toxic stress](#)

Other Articles/Video (General)

- American Psychological Association: [Building Resilience](#)

Supports for mindfulness and meditation

- [Headspace](#) - mindful meditation program is offering no cost meditations to support
- [Calm](#) - meditation and sleep app is offering no cost meditation during COVID-19 pandemic.