



FAMILIES

TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

TOGETHER



FAMILY

YOUTH

Our Family Will Get Through This! Making Meaning of Adversity

We all know that because of the pandemic youth have had losses. Those losses include proms, graduations, participating in sports and tournaments and club activities, to name a few. Less obvious but no less important are losses of freedom and social contacts. As a family, how do we help our teens who may be experiencing stress and anxiety due to these losses, while also helping them to think of ways they can make meaning from these experiences?

Listening and Acknowledging Fear and Anxiety

Fear and anxiety need to be faced head on. Avoiding our fears builds roadblocks and can cause anxiety. One way to move forward while facing fears is to focus on doing our best with what is possible and letting go of the rest. This starts with understanding the difference between what is and what is not within our control. As [Amy Morin suggests in Psychology Today](#), figuring out what we can control can be as simple as “taking a minute to examine the things you have control over. You can't prevent a storm from coming, but you can prepare for it. You can't control how someone else behaves, but you can control how you react. Recognize that, sometimes, all you can control is your effort and your attitude. When you put your energy into the things you can control, you'll be much more effective.”

Activities

- **Carrying out small house projects.** Sometimes even little things, like cleaning or organizing your space, can help you feel more in control. And (added bonus!) those little things may also help the people we're living with! Take back some control by choosing and completing a small, manageable house project that may benefit yourself or the folks you live with. Even taking time to do both the little and big things in life will offer you opportunities to find a sense of purpose.
- **Journal writing.** Using journal writing as a way to think about all that is going on inside you and in the world can provide mental, physical and emotional health and wellness. Therapeutic journal writing provides a space for you to write down, record, use photographs, or draw your experiences, thoughts, and feelings along with a space to analyze your concerns and feelings. Below are some journal prompts to help you get started:
 - What is something you feel nervous about right now?
 - What calms you down when you are afraid or upset?
 - If you had one song to play continuously, non-stop, to sum up the backdrop of your life, what would it be?
 - If you could add, change, or cancel one rule at home, what would it be?
 - Where do you feel the most safe and why?

For additional writing prompts visit [50 Therapeutic Journal Prompts for Teens and Adults](#).

To learn more about the science behind the importance of acknowledging fear and anxiety and expressive writing, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Validating Young Children's Feelings and Experiences of Fear](#)
- [Emotional and Physical Health Benefits of Expressive Writing](#)



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College of Health and Human Sciences

Welcome to Families Tackling Tough Times Together!

We hope you find the enclosed ideas and suggestions helpful as you care for your family during the pandemic. We know the pandemic is a very big challenge. How families cope can affect both parents and children for a long time.

We are scientists, educators, and students from Purdue University, and we are here to help! For nine weeks this fall, we will provide weekly collections of ideas for families to use to build on their strengths.

These tools are free, flexible, and informed by science. They are designed for families of all types, with tailored suggestions for children, youth, young adults and older adults, and suitable for both civilian and military families. We hope that your family will try one activity each week!

Would you like to earn financial rewards?

We especially welcome families living in the continental US who are interested in trying out project materials and telling us about their experiences. These families can earn financial rewards by sharing about one hour of their time over the next two months. Sign up now at the link below!

https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ

For more information

- Join the Families Together Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HHSFamiliesTogether/>
- Visit the project website: <https://www.hhs.purdue.edu/families-together/>