

Strengthening your family relationships during the pandemic

It's a first for most couples: spending months confined at home with each other and cut off from normal social connections because of the coronavirus pandemic. Add in the stressors of job disruption or unemployment, virtual learning for the children, lack of childcare, different routines and financial pressures. It is no wonder that many relationships buckle under the strain.

Many people are experiencing anxiety. Seemingly trivial events can lead to angry outbursts and hurt feelings. When a quarrel occurs with your spouse, partner or family member, be ready to forgive and seek forgiveness. The ability to do this and give your loved one a hug will help you stay emotionally connected.

Here are some ways to strengthen your relationships in these difficult times:

- **Talk about your changing roles.** Maybe your employment or household responsibilities have changed and you are anxious or upset. Don't bottle up your feelings; talk to your partner about your concerns. Ask for help if you need it.
- **Maintain your routine.** A regular schedule can help you feel organized and under control.
- **Be quick to praise and slow to criticize.** Remember that you, your partner and your family members are affected by the pandemic in different ways, whether physical, mental, or emotional. Forgive the small lapses or mistakes of others. Focus on the positive and be generous with compliments.
- **Have fun.** It is refreshing to have something to look forward to, whether it is planning a date night, a family bike ride or some other fun activity. Being outdoors can reduce stress and promote positive feelings for one another.
- **Express your appreciation and affection every day.** It is as simple as saying "thank you," when your partner or family member has done something nice, or giving them a hug on a regular basis. We all want to feel loved and appreciated.
- **Resolve conflict without picking up on things from the past or holding grudges.** Conflicts are normal. Stick to the issue, avoid personal attacks and find ways to compromise and forgive quickly. Relationships with others always involve some give and take.
- **Be an attentive listener.** Do not interrupt or let distractions get in the way when you are having a conversation.
- **Take a time out to cool down when you are angry.** In the heat of the moment, you can say things you don't really mean. Leave the room and take time to cool down when you feel like you are losing control of your emotions.
- **Let go of the need to be right.** Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the need to be right that we create unnecessary conflicts and hard feelings. Be kind and focus on coming to a workable resolution over being right.

Help is available. Your program is completely confidential and here to help you and your household members 24/7/365. No situation is too big or too small. Give us a call or visit your program website to get started.