



TOLERANCE AND DEALING WITH FRUSTRATION



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Still in lockdown!?!?

At this point, cabin fever may be setting in and frustration levels are probably at an all-time high. Many families are experiencing stress, tension and anxiety, not only about being in lockdown, but also due to added financial pressure and the uncertainty that we are currently facing. Due to this stress and strain, conflict can easily arise in any household.



Children's behaviour can also be impacted negatively, as their normal routine is disrupted, and they probably miss their teachers and friends.

It is totally normal for family members to become annoyed with each other during this time, as we are in each other's space a lot more than usual. There are also limited possibilities regarding breaking-free, by going out for coffee etc. It is so difficult to not be able to go out and about when you wish too, and feelings of isolation can become quite pronounced, at times.

For the above reasons, it is important to try and manage all family members stress and anxiety. Some strategies have been highlighted in the 'Coping with Anxiety during Uncertain Times' resource pack. However, further strategies will be explored in this resource pack to assist families to deal with frustration and developing tolerance.

Understanding your Frustrations

It is important to understand the source of our frustrations so that we know how to deal with them effectively. Ideally, we want to develop our self-awareness and help our children do this as well.

On a macro level, our social and cultural beliefs are being tested and even questioned. We are unable to partake in the social and cultural rituals we normally would. We have been distanced, physically, from relatives, friends, and colleagues. This can be immensely frustrating and confusing! Children are also experiencing frustration at this level and may feel anxious about when they may see their friends and teachers again.

If we look at the micro level, our houses are no longer just our homes. They have become work offices and classrooms as well. There are just too many things happening at the same time in the same place and we must somehow manage this.

On an individual level, we are all dealing with our own fears regarding what will happen next. As parents, our concern is our livelihoods and ability to sustain our homes and families and educating our children. Our children are probably missing school and finding it strange to have to learn and interact with their teachers virtually. We are also all probably worried about whether we will contract the virus.

These are just some of the things that are making us frustrated and it is very easy to take it out on our families. Please try to reflect on what the actual source of your frustration is before reacting. There are some practical strategies you could use to avoid these frustrations getting out of control.

Phone a Friend

Luckily, we are 'isolated' during a time where we can stay 'connected'. Literally, at the click of a button, we can contact anyone, anywhere, anytime, on any platform.



LET'S DO THIS!

It is vitally important to reach out to your support network to vent, share experiences and connect with other people, during these trying times. You can phone your friends, organise a video chat with your children's friends, or a coffee date with another parent who is also trying their hand at home-schooling their children. We are social beings and being isolated from our friends, and extended family can make us feel lonely and increase feelings of sadness. There are online forums, Facebook groups, and communities that will allow you to chat to others who understand what you are going through, as we are all in the same boat. Zoom and House Party are two apps that allow you to connect with your loved ones, and during the lockdown you can have free Zoom meetings for up to 90 minutes at a time. There are also a lot of informative YouTube videos on dealing with challenges and family conflicts during the lockdown (see source list).

Practise Time-Out as a Family

Parents and teachers often use 'time-out' as a strategy to assist young children to remove themselves from a situation and calm down. Well maybe this is the time for ALL family members to try this, considering we are in each other's spaces all the time and at times may feel we are going to lose it. Removing oneself from a situation, even just to go to another room or outside, can help defuse a lot of conflict.

It may also be very useful for each family member to have some time-out from the others in the household. If you feel that you are reaching boiling point, volunteer to go and buy your essential goods in order to get out of the house for a while. If this is not possible due to single parenting, or work-from-home commitments, schedule some quiet time where you allow the children to play or read quietly on their own for a while, watch a bit of TV or have their screen-time. Find your 'safe space' where you can go to help alleviate some of your frustrations and stress. It may be useful to create a calm corner, somewhere in the house, where children can have some time to relax with books, puzzles or other calming activities. Parents may also make use of this strategy, by using the calm corner to scream into a pillow, weep uncontrollably or do deep breathing exercises.



Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries

It will be very helpful to explain and discuss boundaries together, especially with children, as they often demand attention, when parents need to focus on their work. Explaining to children that they need to respect their parents work-time, or for example, not use their phone when their parent is in a Zoom meeting, as it affects the internet speed, could be very helpful.

Having a family schedule or daily routine can assist children in understanding when parents are able to give them attention and when not. Beforehand, plan activities that your child can do while you are busy.



Roles and Responsibilities

Linked closely with boundaries, is getting everyone in the family to pitch in during this difficult time. It is much more pleasant to be stuck indoors if you do not have toys everywhere, and dishes piled up to the ceiling (no judgement here, we do the best we can). Therefore, it could be very useful to discuss the importance of everyone doing their fair share and taking their responsibilities seriously. Assign age appropriate chores to your children. It is also important to try and cut family members a little bit of slack if you see they are doing too much. It is easier said than done but try and be considerate and help where you can. In the case where parents are working from home, it may be useful to try divide childcare times, and other duties as far as possible.



Daily Routine

This has been mentioned before but cannot be emphasised enough - making a plan or schedule with specific times for schoolwork, screen-time, and work, could go a long way in limiting irritation for everyone in the family. Scheduling children's screen time or nap time (if you are still that lucky) during work time, may be helpful in this regard.



Communication is Key

Clear communication is imperative during this difficult time, especially with your partner. Talking about how you feel, what each of you needs, as well as planning your schedules together to make sure everyone feels heard. This is very important as it can minimise resentment and arguments in the household.

Allowing children to be part of scheduling, planning and giving them choices (within reasonable limits), can increase their motivation to follow through on tasks, and feel understood.

Am I an "angry mom" or do I have unmet needs for...

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opportunities to re-charge



mental stimulation



a sense of accomplishment



quiet/down time



food & water for my body



opportunities for social connection



physical & mental rest



opportunities for movement



opportunities for creativity



feeling seen & appreciated

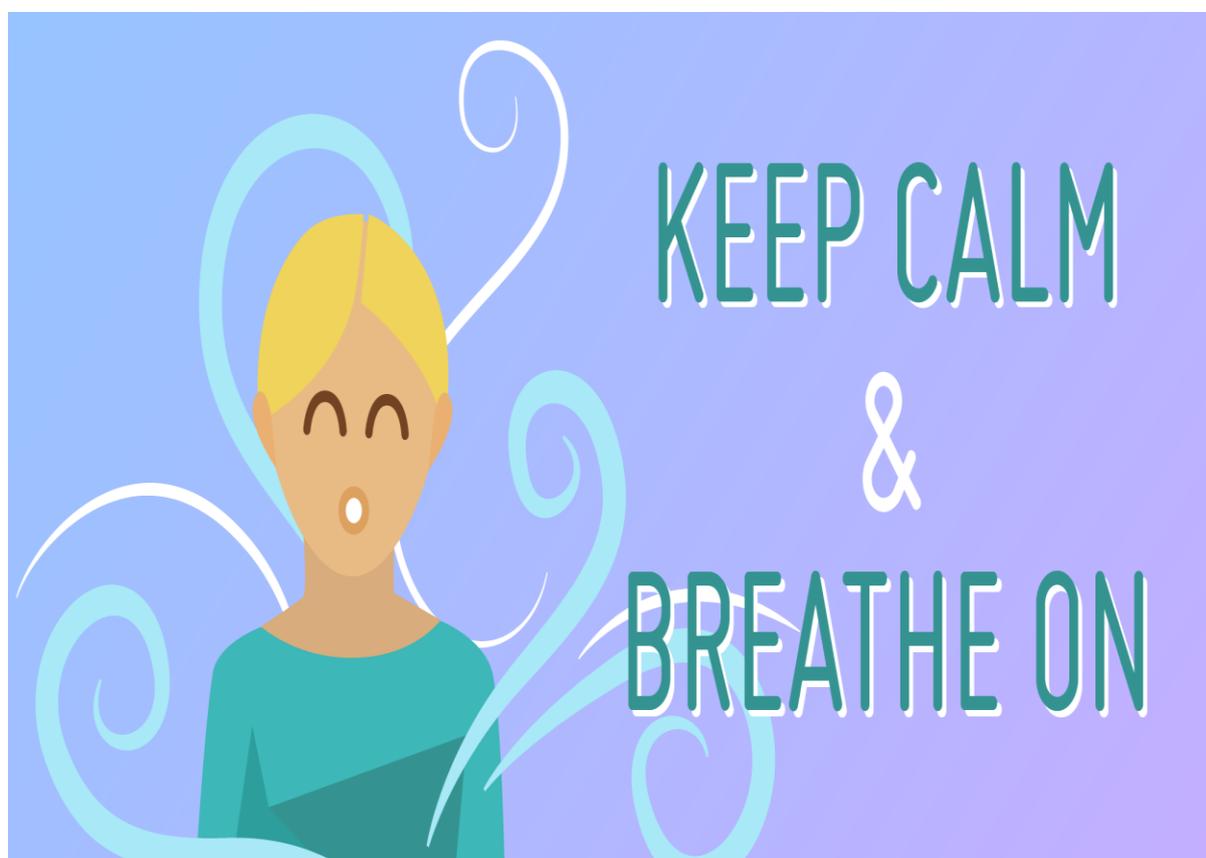


intimacy & feeling known

Stay Calm, Breathe, Laugh and Carry On

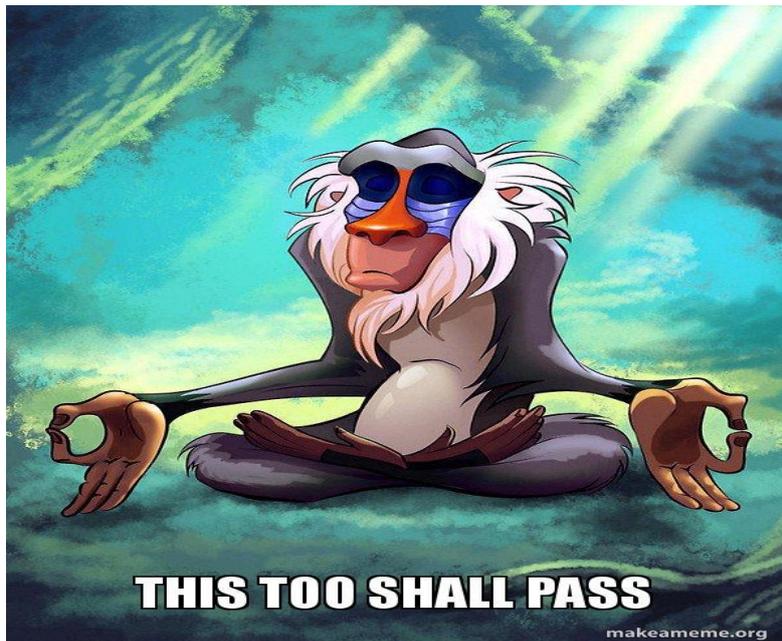
It can be very difficult to get children to do maths worksheets and chores, especially when there are so many other fun things to do at home. This can lead to power struggles and arguments, if emotions are not managed. Try to stay calm and explain to children, why it is important that everyone does their work and chores. Using goals and rewards can be very helpful in this regard. Using the famous Premack Principle, i.e. eat your supper to get pudding, or do your maths worksheet now and you can have free time afterwards, can be helpful in this regard. As mentioned in the previous resource pack, taking short fun breaks, such as dancing around the house, and making learning sessions fun and practical may be very useful.

Trying to have fun together, making jokes and doing activities you enjoy together can make a huge difference to the vibe in the household. Children (and partners) will enjoy helping you, if they receive realistic praise and feel appreciated. In this regard it is important to let go of perfectionism, and not remake the child's bed or repack the dishwasher, because it is not done the way you would have liked. Try and remember to have patience and empathy (easier said than done).



This too Shall Pass

We don't know when the lockdown will end or what exactly the consequences will be but try to remember that this too shall pass. It is not an easy time, but there is nothing we can do to change it, so we might as well have a good attitude about being at home. It is keeping us safe. Be kind to each other, as far as possible. It is not fair to take your frustration and stress out on your family members, especially children (not always easy not to). Try to stay positive by still having family braais, at-home date nights or even an at home-spa day. Exercising together, can be great fun and help to deal with stress.



Get Help

If the anxiety and stress you are experiencing is affecting your ability to function, or you are feeling depleted, it is time to get help. The South African Anxiety and Depression Support Group will be able to refer you to an online support group or therapist. The School Educational Psychologists can also be e-mailed to provide support, referrals and further suggestions.

South African Depression and Anxiety Support Group - 0800 21 22 23/0800 70 80 90

List of sources:

- <https://www.familylives.org.uk> . *Coping emotionally and practically during the COVID-19 breakdown-* (accessed 18 April 2020).

YouTube video – *coping with covid 19/stress management for parents* (accessed 18 April 2020)

-South African Depression and Anxiety Support Group.- www.sadag.org (accessed 19 April, 2020).

-<https://www.houseparty.com>. House Party- face to face social network. (available on Playstore).

- Zoom App. <https://zoom.us>. (available on Playstore).