

# 'OHANA / CAREGIVER INFORMATION

## on Dealing with the Stress from Coronavirus (COVID-19)

### Coping with the Stress of a Community Trauma

Our islands are no stranger to community trauma, whether its cultural, natural disasters, or otherwise. As a community, we have been able to come together and heal in the past. But this is different. It will be difficult not to get together with our neighbors, friends and extended 'ohana to get through this, but as we have heard, being together in person will put EVERYONE, especially our KEIKI and KUPUNA, at risk of serious illness. But being alone & isolated from our loved ones can bring other kinds of stress. Remember, this is a temporary situation. It will be pau soon, but we can help to recover as a community quicker if we follow medical authorities to isolate and stay home so we can protect our community!

### Self-Care & Coping

During this time, coping with additional stress & uncertainty is challenging for everyone. In order to help our entire 'ohana, it's so important to take care of ourselves first, so we will be able to take care of others better. If we are overwhelmed, it will be harder to help our keiki be calm & safe. Here are a few things to pay attention to so we can all be healthy, balanced and safe:

- **FIND JOY.** Do something EVERYDAY that brings a smile to your face! Like: listen to music, bake something together, be silly, go out in your yard to feel the sunshine, learn a new hobby, read a book, garden, organize your house.
- **BE A ROLE MODEL.** Remember you are a role model for your keiki. How you handle stress will impact how your keiki handles this stressful situation now & in the future. It is a good time to teach them healthy ways to get through difficult times.
- **DRINK WATER & GET PLENTY SLEEP.** Drink lots of water & get restful sleep! Water will help our bodies fight anything & flush out toxins. SLEEP IS WHEN OUR BODIES & MINDS HEAL! Getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night is critical for young adults and 9-11 hours for keiki. Try not to look at your phone in bed. It will make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- **FEED YOUR SOUL.** Seek religious/spiritual guidance or professional counseling for support. This may be available online or by telephone during this outbreak.
- **LIMIT ALCOHOL USE.** Although it might seem like an easy way to cope right now, be sure you don't increase or rely on drug or alcohol use to cope. And remember, you're a role model & your keiki need to learn how to cope ... they watch how we deal with stress & will learn from us.
- **BREATHE DEEP.** Be sure you are aware of when your stress increases. When you are feeling more irritable or impatient, take time out to take breathe deeply. Taking just three deep breaths helps our brains calm down & relax immediately. And it's a good thing for our keiki to see how to cope in a healthy way.
- **LIMIT ELECTRONICS.** Take regular breaks from your phones, social media & TV. It is important to stay up to date, as new information is coming out constantly, but it can cause us more stress & overwhelm. Schedule time specifically to connect, then be pau.
- **EXERCISE.** Since our parks and gyms are closed, it's challenging to release stress now. Find free apps online or go in your yard to play outdoor games with your keiki. Exercise helps us feel better immediately and is a healthy way to cope.



## Helping Children Cope

Your keiki may respond differently to this stress & trauma, depending on their age. Below are some things you might see according to age group & the best ways you can respond.

Age of Keiki	What You Might See	How You Can Respond
<b>PRESCHOOL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of being alone, bad dreams</li> <li>• Speech difficulties</li> <li>• Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> <li>• Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASK &amp; LISTEN to how they are feeling. Acknowledge their feelings. Patience, empathy &amp; reassurance are critical right now.</li> <li>• Create virtual play sessions with friends and family.</li> <li>• Provide comfort by being calm &amp; loving (verbal &amp; physical)</li> <li>• Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling</li> <li>• Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements</li> <li>• Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime</li> <li>• Maintain regular family routines</li> <li>• Avoid media exposure</li> </ul>
<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (6–12 years old)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior</li> <li>• Clinging, nightmares</li> <li>• Sleep/appetite disturbance</li> <li>• Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)</li> <li>• Withdrawal from others, loss of interest</li> <li>• Competition for parents' attention</li> <li>• Forgetfulness about chores &amp; new information learned at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASK &amp; LISTEN to how they are feeling. Acknowledge their feelings &amp; let them know they are not alone. Patience, empathy, &amp; reassurance are critical right now.</li> <li>• Create virtual play sessions &amp; staying in touch with friends through telephone &amp; Internet</li> <li>• Regular exercise &amp; stretching</li> <li>• Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games)</li> <li>• Participate in structured household chores</li> <li>• Set gentle but firm limits</li> <li>• Discuss the current outbreak &amp; encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family &amp; community</li> <li>• Encourage expression through play &amp; conversation</li> <li>• Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors &amp; maintaining family routines</li> <li>• Limit media exposure and talk about what they have seen/heard can help them process what is going on. But limit those conversations...talk about other things too.</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH SCHOOL (13-18 years old)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.)</li> <li>• Sleep/appetite changes</li> <li>• Irritation or decrease in energy</li> <li>• Isolating from others</li> <li>• Angry outbursts because they cannot be with friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASK &amp; LISTEN to how they are feeling. Acknowledge their feelings &amp; let them know they are not alone. Patience, empathy, &amp; reassurance are critical right now.</li> <li>• Encourage continuation of routines</li> <li>• Encourage short discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force)</li> <li>• Stay in touch with friends through FaceTime, telephone, video games</li> <li>• Encourage them to participate in regular routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings</li> <li>• Limit media exposure, talk about what they have seen/heard can help them process what is going on but talk about other things too, not just this situation.</li> <li>• Explain why they cannot do normal things right now. The more they know why, the better they can accept the outcome.</li> <li>• Encourage them to practice healthy self-care techniques &amp; role model to their siblings. This is an opportunity for them to learn healthy ways of coping with stress, which can help them in their future.</li> </ul>

**Additional Resources**  
on mental health care  
during this pandemic:  
auw211.org  
CDC.gov  
NCTSN.org  
SAMHSA.gov

**State of Hawaii info:**  
www.hawaiiicovid19.com  
**Center for Disease Control:**  
www.coronavirus.gov  
**COVID-19 Hotline:**  
Dial 2-1-1

Reference: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. [www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org), March 1, 2020

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