

Tips for Surviving and Thriving as a Family During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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1. Since we live in close quarters at home during the pandemic, how do we keep from getting on each other's nerves?

Convene a family meeting in which you agree to set a few healthy boundaries, if you have not already done so. In fact, commit to having regular family meetings during this time. Don't simply wait to see what will happen. What comes naturally is selfishness and anger. So, process the information ahead of time and pray that God will help you respond patiently and kindly in every situation.

This is also a good time to reinstate family worship or begin having it if you have not done so before. Family worship is a good time to come together as a family and allow family members to express their true feelings about what's happening outside and inside the home because of the pandemic. Provide assurance that God is in control and you will get through this together. Sing familiar songs. Have each family member read or recite their favorite Bible verse. And, pray together for God's peace and protection during this difficult time.

2. Is it OK to set time apart for each family member to be alone? How do we not get offended when our spouse, child, or family member asks for personal space?

Yes, of course. During your family meeting, also agree on this option, so that when it happens no one feels taken for granted or ignored. Agree ahead of time that if anyone is feeling a bit boxed-in and needs some space, they can say so kindly without receiving any judgment from the others. Teenagers and college-age young adults will also need personal time to connect online or by social media with their friends; so knowing that they have some personal space each day can be a very healthy practice.

3. If my spouse or family member feels anxious or gets nervous during these tension-filled days, how can I help them without offending them or talking down to them?

Feeling anxious during this pandemic is expected and not unusual. Asking questions rather than making statements is a good idea as you relate to your loved one. You may ask questions like: *Are you feeling concerned about what you've been listening to on the news? Or, is there something I can do for you or get for you to make you feel better? Or, would you like me to pray with you for God to give you peace?* Emphasize that you are on the same team and will get through this crisis together with the help of God.

4. What if we are empty nesters and need to reconnect; what are some activities we can do to help break the ice and feel reconnected?

Invite your spouse to play a board game or read a book together. You may also ask her or him if there is something fun you can do together. Allow your spouse to choose the activity. If your spouse shows no interest at that time, ask him or her to share a time that would work for them. You may also download Be patient, gentle, and remember to give your spouse the benefit of the doubt.

5. If I am a single adult and live alone what can I do to not feel lonely and remain positive?

Being single doesn't mean you have to feel lonely any more than being married means you'll never feel lonely. Yet, during this pandemic it is vital to be deliberate about planning your day to be filled with purpose and hope. Plan to connect with God by having morning and evening worship and schedule time to bond with family members and friends at regular intervals. If you have a smartphone plan to use the function that allows you to see the person you are speaking with for a more dynamic conversation. You may also use Skype or Zoom.

By scheduling time during your week to help older relatives or neighbors get groceries and their mail, will pay great dividends in feeling useful and accomplished. This is also a great time to catch up on your reading and fortify your mind with good literature and inspirational music.

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