



Cognitive Behavior Associates is offering tele-psychotherapy services during this difficult time. Please call (310) 858-3831 to schedule an appointment.



## **Children & Parents: The Summer of COVID-19**

**A Message from our Director of Children & Adolescent Services:  
Flora Zaken-Greenberg, Ph.D.**

Congratulations parents! Home schooling is over and you and your children have survived. For those of you who have children still in school or sending in late assignments, you are almost there. The question now is what do you do with and for your children over the summer? If your children typically went to camp for the summer, local or sleep away, that is not an option. For those families whose children stayed home, there are also major adjustments to be made as social distance is still in effect and playing in the neighborhood and having sleepovers may not be possible for many. Your teens may not be able to work this summer. What you decide to do ultimately depends on the age and ages of your children, whether or not the adults are working at work or remotely, and what resources are available to you. Let's start with some general guidelines for your children of any age.

### **Maintain a routine**

Even in the summer it is important to have a routine. Without one, many children may experience more anxiety that can lead to acting out. Work with your children to make a daily schedule. By involving your children in the process, they feel like they have some control and they are more likely to comply with the new routine. Make sure to schedule some fun activities that your child/children can do independently as well as with you.



Give them choices of activities available for each day, again, letting them have some sense of control. Part of maintaining a routine is having a wake-up time and a sleep time. This can be different from the school routine, but a sleep routine is healthy physically and emotionally. It is also important to change from sleep wear to day clothing as it helps make a distinction between sleep time and active time and it also allows your children to have a more typical and constant expectation of their day. In addition to a sleep routine, try to have meals on a regular schedule and try to eat as a family. Although the entire family may not be available for every meal, if your child is young enough to not be left alone, have available family members eat together. If you have a teen that is home alone, call them, text them, leave a note on the table or setting in which they will be having their meal telling them you are thinking of them and love them.

### **Limit screen time**

Many children have had much more screen time since COVID19 and quarantine. Try and balance out screen time with outside physical activities and inside fun activities. Walking together, finding different places to walk, riding bikes together, playing catch or tag outside, and any other outside activity your child would enjoy with you will be incredibly healthy. Our bodies were made to move and this is especially important for children. Maybe you can plant a garden, if not in a yard in a vegetable box. Children love when what they planted starts to grow. Also, a happy and tired child is a very good thing for the child and the parents. Set up some fun indoor activities as well. You can have family game nights and each child can pick the game on one of the nights. The family can work on a jigsaw puzzle together (age appropriate, so you may need 2 or 3 separate puzzles to work on) and then you can glue it together with puzzle glue, frame it and hang it up in your child's room. You can also have family lego night, family dance night, family movie night, family board game night, and parents, you can share funny family stories with your children that you can video tape. Have your child teach you their favorite video game. You are only as limited as your imagination.

### **Stay emotionally connected**

Make virtual play dates for your children with their friends and if they are old enough to understand social distance, set up some play dates in a front yard or a local open park. Try a park you have not been to in order to get some novel views and experiences. Stay virtually connected

with family and family friends and involve your children in setting this up. Young children love to show their artwork or a picture of the lego tower they made. Older children like to talk about their interests, but also like to know what is going on with friends and family. Maybe grandparents can share their childhood stories and those of the parents. Writing down this oral history is a real gift to the family.



### Be generous with your praise

Children love attention, especially positive attention. Many parents feel that they should not have to praise and reinforce something their child is supposed to do. However, people of all ages like to be recognized, especially for something they really do not want to do. The more you praise your child, the less they are likely to act out for attention. Spacing activities with them through out the day is also an excellent way to reduce acting out, especially from boredom. That being said, your children also need to learn how to entertain themselves for some time periods during the day, especially if you are working from home.

### Provide some learning experiences



You can help prevent and actually maintain and progress academically with some fun activities at home. With your younger children, you can read together and then talk about the story, draw a picture together of your favorite part of the story, and even talk about what you liked and did not like about the story. For your older children (age 10-11 and older), you can read the story and discuss the plot, the protagonist and supporting characters, the

flow and the end. Again, you can also discuss what you liked and what you did not like, what you would change, and if you had to change the ending, how you would do it. There are cards you can purchase that help with basic math, such as war but you have to be able to add or subtract the problem on the card, and at a higher level, you have to multiply or divide to get the number for war. Scrabble is great for spelling and vocabulary. There are even board games available that help with fractions. Go on the internet and you will find many activities you can do with your children. There are virtual museum tours (not just of paintings), cooking classes for children, story time (Michele Obama is doing a story time), and suggested activities. Talking to grandparents is a great way to get in a history lesson, especially if you look up pictures and news stories of the time being referenced.

### Help is available

If your child is struggling with anxiety or depression regarding the pandemic, there is help through tele-health. Psychologists are providing therapy for children and their families during this time to help you help your child navigate what is happening. If your child has a history of anxiety, depression, or any other mental health issue and it seems to be getting worse, if you already have a therapist reach out and see if they can provide video therapy and if not, if they can refer you to someone. You can not take care of your children if you do not take care of yourself and if you find that you are overwhelmed and not handling stress well, help is also available for you. A therapist can help you problem solve the unique situation in your family and your life with COVID19.

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Cognitive Behavior Associates (CBA) is one of the largest clinical practices in the Los Angeles area offering short-term, problem-focused therapy from a cognitive-behavioral perspective.

All of our treatments are based on scientific research, and we continually measure and quantify progress for each client so we know when therapy is working. Each of our clinicians differs in areas of expertise and interest, and these factors are taken into account when matching a client with a clinician.

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