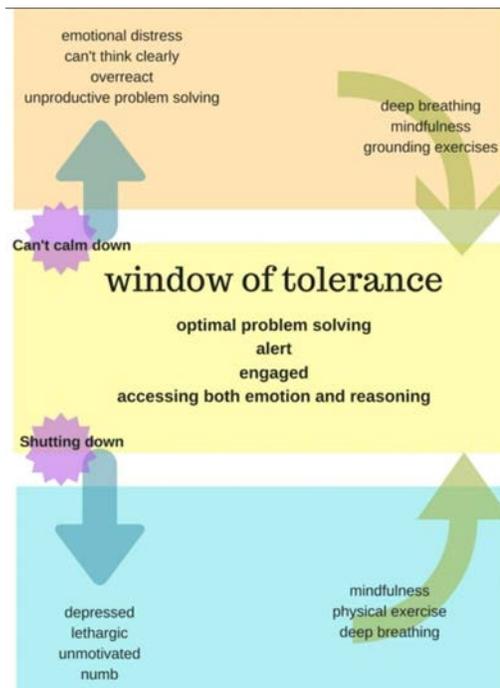




Visualize a “Window of Tolerance” Model

- The Window of Tolerance model provides a way of visualizing and understanding whether a person is in a state where they are able to “process and manage” stressors, feelings, communication with others and/or other challenges.
- This model can really help parents understand and support themselves and their children and teens.
- When a person is in their “window of tolerance” they are able to experience their emotions and still maintain their ability to think, integrate new information and make choices. They can cope relatively effectively and “handle things” as needed. Even if they get a little agitated, they know they can soothe themselves and bring themselves back into a comfortable, capable emotional zone.

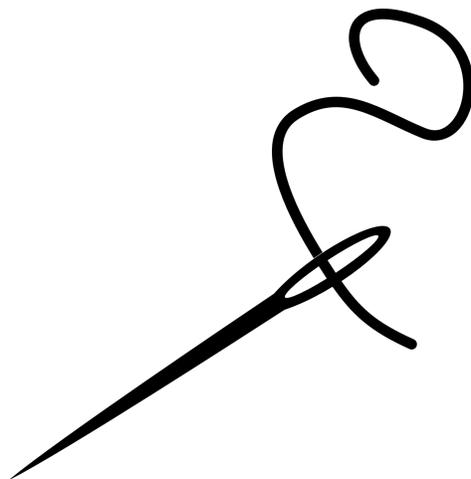


- When a person experiences too much stress or challenge they move out of their window of tolerance and their ability to think, feel and problem solve effectively changes
- When a person goes ABOVE their window of tolerance they often experience emotional distress and are more likely to express their thoughts and feelings reactively. We often think of this as the “fight or flight” response.
 - Children often “act up” when they are in this state.
 - Parents tend to either overly express their intense thoughts and feelings or withdraw from their children and teens because they are focused on their own experience and needs.
- When a person goes BELOW their window of tolerance they often feel numb, empty and/or shut down. This is also called the “freeze” response.
 - Sometimes parents don’t notice when children and teens are BELOW their window of tolerance because they are quiet, withdrawn and aren’t seeking support. (This is very different from a child or teen being comfortably quiet or enjoying time on their own.)
 - It’s challenging for children and teens when parents go BELOW their window of tolerance because the parent is emotionally unavailable. This can be just as frightening for children as having their parent over-react.



Support your family to repair and rebuild after conflict.

- Think about the developmental age and stage of your child and then talk directly and clearly after times of family conflict.
- Take responsibility for your part in the conflict and focus on the importance of the relationship.
 - For example, if the child is young, you might say *“I’m sorry I yelled. It’s important we all treat each other with respect. Family is so important.”*
 - If your child is a young teen, you might say *“I’m sorry I told you to get off the computer without giving you any warnings. I was listening to the news and I reacted to the sound of the computer with anger. We value respect for others in our family. I’m going to try to give you five minute warnings as we’ve agreed. Family is so important.”*
- Watch closely for times when your children and teens are trying to repair and rebuild after conflict. This is especially important if they were unkind or their behaviour negatively affected others. Really try to recognize their “bid for connection and repair” and give them the opportunity to make things better. This can be challenging when parents are stressed and/or have strong feelings.
- Supporting children and teens to reconnect and repair supports them to take personal responsibility for their actions, develop security and self-confidence and feel like an active contributing member of the family.



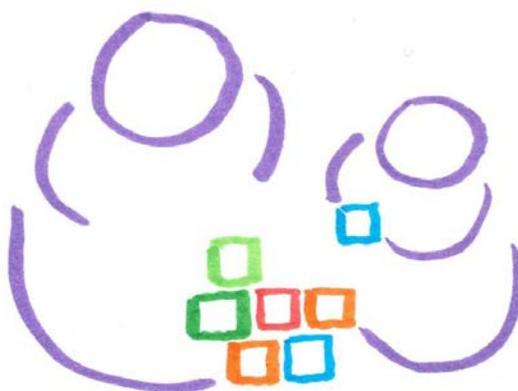
Connecting Through Shared Activity



Keep in Mind:

Doing pleasant and/or constructive things together supports everyone in the family to feel more secure and connected.

- Families are cooped up together. Many parents are trying to work at home or dealing with the loss of their work. Other parents are working full-out and worried about bringing COVID-19 home. Nerves are frayed. People may be bumping into each other and going stir crazy. It may seem strange to focus on spending time together.
- We encourage you to deliberately choose to create shared family activities that are (more or less) pleasant, fun and/or interesting. It may take some effort at first if people are cranky or “out of sorts” and probably won’t be pleasurable every minute. It’s worth it. Shared purpose, interest and/or fun can build everyone’s capacity to cope with stress and get along. It can “fill people’s emotional cups,” meet basic human needs for connection and result in less reactive emotions and behavior all around.
- There are so many fun and interesting things to do with children and teens!



Tips:

Get active together.

- Everyone needs movement and exercise. Think of things your family can do together while maintaining the recommended physical distance from others such as going for walks and bike rides.
- Soccer might be cancelled but it’s great to kick a ball around with parents or brothers and sisters.
- Take turns putting on your favourite music and dance, dance, dance.





Make up stories together.

- One person can make up the beginning of a story and the next person keep the story going. This can go from person to person or back and forth between two people. It's best if there are no "rights and wrongs" or corrections. This creates an opportunity for playful interaction and interpersonal growth and development.



Plan meals, cook and eat together.

- It takes more time and patience for parents and there will probably be more mess but this is a great way for children and teens to learn to have pleasure by creating, giving and sharing with others.
- Planning and preparing food also helps children and teens learn important skills such as planning and organization, collaboration and coping constructively when things don't turn out as expected.
- Eating meals together often builds connection and security in families.



Create art individually and together.

- You can use art supplies, old boxes and/or outdoor materials such as leaves.
- Creating art together is an opportunity to follow your child's lead.
- Sometimes children and teens want to collaborate and create something together.
- Other times they may want to create boundaries and "do their own thing."
- Both connection and independence are very important in families and creating art together is a way to develop both!



Sing together.

- Singing and/or creating music together often helps people feel "in-tune," connected with others and secure.





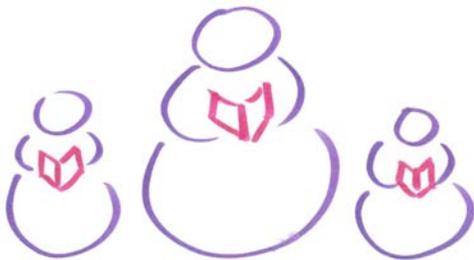
Watch movies, TV shows and documentaries together.

- Choose shows that are developmentally appropriate for your children or teens.
- TALK about the things you watch in ways that support your children/teens to think and interact with you.
 - Young children can talk about what happened, how they felt and what might happen next.
 - Older children (and parents) benefit from more complex discussions:
 - Why do you think the characters made those choices?
 - What were the consequences of their choices and actions?
 - How would you have changed the movie if you were the director?
 - What did you think about the music in the movie? How did it affect the movie and/or how we responded?
 - What did you think about the setting? How would a different setting impact the story and/or our response?
 - What kind of movies or shows would you like to make?



Share books together.

- Choose a book to read out loud together. This builds family connection with kids and teens of all ages.
- It's also good for children and teens to read independently and then talk about what they're reading with the family.
 - Young children can learn to retell the story in their own words and make up alternative stories or endings.
 - Older children and teens benefit from engaged, critical discussion about the ideas, values and themes in books.
- The Vancouver Public Library has online suggested reading lists for kids of different ages and interests as well as suggestions for ways to talk to kids about books.



<https://www.vpl.ca/kids/raising-readers>



“Screen Time” and Access to News and Social Media

Keep in mind:

There are many “pros and cons” associated with screen time and access to news and social media. It’s helpful to consider their impact and make active choices.

- There are wonderful things to do online that support adults and kids to be connected to others, learn, develop skills, have fun and feel capable.
- We need to keep up with current news and health recommendations.
- Connecting online with friends and family is particularly important at this time.
- Many people of every age spend too much time on screens (phones, computers, gaming consoles and TV’s), listening to news and interacting with social media. This affects our overall well-being and ability to cope. Many people are not using their online time very constructively.

Tips:



It’s important to think about ways screen-time and listening to news are affecting everyone’s well-being.

- What is playing in the background on the TV, radio and computer? How might it be affecting your children and teens?
- What is each person doing online? What information are they “consuming?”
- How are “screen-time” and/or listening to news affecting each person’s overall well-being, mood, thoughts, feelings and body sensations?
- In what ways are screen-time and listening to news helping people?
- In what ways are screen-time and listening to news creating difficulties?
- Is everyone getting information from reliable and accurate sources? If not, how can we address this problem?
- The Canadian Pediatric Association provides excellent articles on screen time. The first is for young children and the second is for school age children and teens.

<https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>

https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/digital-media?utm_source=Media&utm_medium=News%20Release&utm_campaign=Digital%20Media



Most parents would benefit from limiting their own screen time and access to news.



- Be a role model:
 - Choose to limit your own screen time.
 - Stay informed but limit listening to media about the pandemic.
 - Make sure you are getting your information from reliable and accurate sources.
 - Try to engage in meaningful and constructive online activities more often.
 - Actively choose to engage in non-screen activities.



Talk to children and teens about their screen time and their sources of information about the pandemic.



- Talk to them (constructively) about what they are doing and ways these things are affecting their mood, thoughts, feelings, body sensations, relationships and perspective about the pandemic.
- Support them to access reliable and accurate sources of information. (Many school age and teens may know more about this than you!)
- Provide enriching options they can do online.
- Importantly, notice when they are off-screen and recognize and support their non-screen choices.

Set up quiet times when everyone in the home is engaged in non-screen activities.



A note to parents who have experienced trauma and/or have other mental health challenges



Keep in Mind:

The uncertainty, rapid change and loss of control everyone is experiencing can be particularly difficult for people who have experienced trauma or have other mental health challenges.

- Trauma involves a person having an experience or experiences that was/were so overwhelming at the time that the person could not process or “assimilate” the experience. Traumatic experience or experiences overwhelm the central nervous system and affect the way we process and recall memories. People who have experienced trauma often experience a lot of thoughts, feelings and body sensations in the present that are related to their past traumatic experience – and it can be really challenging to tell if current thoughts, feelings and body sensations are related to the past or present.
- In times of intense stress and uncertainty, many people who have experienced previous trauma feel overwhelmed and “triggered” into “old fear” that is “stored in the body.” (Bessel van der Kolk)
- This is understandable. It’s useful to be aware that this is happening and to develop the ability to “untangle” the traumatic processing (“old” traumatic fear being experienced now in thoughts, feelings and body sensations – as if the traumatic experience was happening now) and your current environment and experience. This takes time and practice. Knowing this is happening is a good start!
- Similarly, parents who have mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder or psychosis may find that their mental health symptoms worsen when they experience intense stress, worry and/or uncertainty. Again, this is understandable.



Tips:



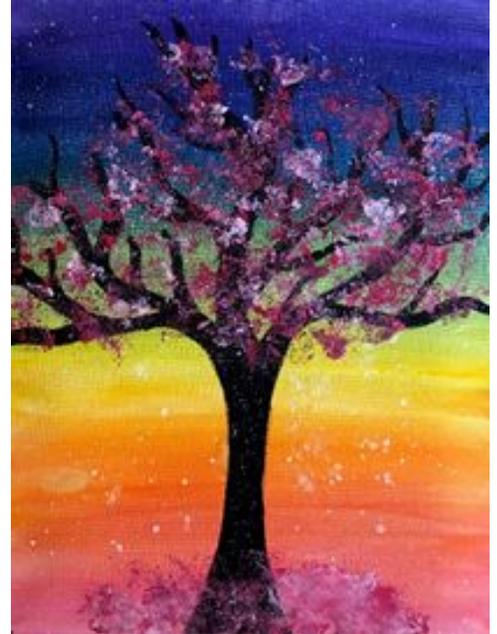
Use strategies and treatments that have helped you in the past.

- In times of change, it's often most helpful to support or "contain" yourself by doing things that have been helpful in the past. Think about things that have helped you feel more stable and/or secure and incorporate them into your daily life.



Try to establish and maintain a daily routine.

- Try to maintain daily structure that includes regular meals, exercise and getting up at the same time each day. This helps most people who have experienced trauma and/or mental health challenges cope.



Get support.

- We strongly encourage you to reach out for support from friends, family, social agencies and professionals.
- Getting the right support will help you and your kids.



Find ways to "ground."

- "Grounding" involves deliberately doing something to help ourselves feel more "present" and less overwhelmed, confused or distressed.
- There are many ways to ground. This article provides quite a few choices:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques>

- It's best to practice grounding as often as you can, ideally when you feel relatively calm. This practice makes it more likely that you will be able to ground when you're experiencing strong thoughts, feelings or body sensations.



Be kind to yourself.

- Try to treat yourself with the kindness and understanding you would give a friend.





Finally, a word about resilience



Resilience is the ability to cope and respond adaptively to stressors or difficulties. It's kind of the ability to roll with the punches and keep some balance and/or forward momentum when things get tough. Resilience is highly protective and very important for managing life's many challenges.

- Briefly, children, teens and adults develop resilience from successfully managing just the right amount of stress. The right amount of stress is the amount of stress that a person is capable of managing effectively.
 - When a person successfully manages just the right amount of stress, their capacity to manage stress increases and they are ready to take on a little more challenge.
 - If a person experiences more stress than they are able to successfully manage, they can be overwhelmed and their ability to manage stress can decrease rather than increase.
 - If a person doesn't experience any stress, they don't have the opportunity to develop their coping ability or resilience.
- Ideally, it's best if everyone in the family is exposed to the amount of stress (change, loss, uncertainty, challenges and intense emotions) that is appropriate to their developmental age and within their window of tolerance. This way they can "manage" the stress and develop resilience. Of course, this is extremely challenging in the middle of a pandemic.
- There are enormous social and financial stressors at this time that require large social and governmental actions. At the same time, the small day-to-day and large choices a parent makes strongly affect their family's well-being and long-term resilience.
- Many of our ideas and suggestions are intended to help parents, children and families develop resilience in this challenging time.





We wish you and your family connection, security and growth



- Our individual, family and community response to COVID-19 is an opportunity to develop connection, emotion regulation, problem solving and resiliency.
- Children and teens learn constantly from the people and environment around them.
- We understand the pandemic is extremely serious and many adults don't have enough support, connection and/or financial and emotional security.
- We hope that some of the ideas and suggestions in the book help you, your children and your family navigate and weather the COVID-19 storm together.
- We hope you actively choose to support well-being and connection in your family and, as much as possible, try to keep the stressors, demands and emotions within everyone's "window of tolerance." This would likely involve focusing on stress reduction and emotion regulation many times a day. Doing this has the potential to support your children and teens to become more secure and resilient.
- Remember, children and teens learn from overcoming obstacles and adversity together, "repairing and rebuilding," "trying again" and "returning to their window of tolerance" again and again.
- We hope that you and your family become stronger, more connected and more able to manage adversity during this time.





COVID-19 Information and Supports



Government Websites with information about COVID-19 and supports

Government of British Columbia (Includes current updates and information about financial and social program supports)

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support?utm_campaign=20200319_GCPE_AM_COVID_4_NOTIFICATION_BCGOV_BCGOV_EN_BC_NOTIFICATION

Government of Canada (includes up to date national information and links to Employment Insurance and other emergency financial relief supports)

https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse.html?&utm_campaign=gc-hc-sc-coronavirusoutbreak-1920-0165-9221800776&utm_medium=search&utm_source=google-ads-96470960074&utm_content=text-en-415799325995&utm_term=%2Bcoronavirus%20%2Bcanada

City of Vancouver (includes updates and status of city programs and supports available)

<https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/covid-19-coronavirus-within-vancouver.aspx>

COVID-19 Financial Help: EI benefits, bill deferrals and other emergency funds in B.C.

CBC article outlining financial supports and programs available in B.C.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/covid-19-financial-help-1.5501743>

EI Application Support (Updates from Service Canada and Application Link)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

Food Security

<https://foodbank.bc.ca/>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020MAH0013-000536>





COVID-19 Information and Supports cont'd



Reliable Health Information about COVID-19

<http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/vancouver-coastal-health-statement-on-coronavirus>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Common Questions about COVID-19

Find answers to some of the most common questions about COVID-19

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/common-questions>

Provincial COVID-19 News

Daily updates from the B.C. Government and the Provincial Health Officer.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/Search?q=COVID-19>

It does not address the question regarding security, but that may be challenging with the restricted capacity most organizations are experiencing now.

COVID-Response: Food and Shelter Programs

<https://www.overdosecommunity.ca/single-post/2020/03/19/COVID-Response-FoodShelter-programs-open-in-Vancouver>

<https://www.linkvan.ca/>

HealthLink BC

Provides non-emergency health information by phone. Health-service representatives help callers identify symptoms and advise them on when and where to seek medical treatment and/or testing.

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/>

Service Line: 8-1-1 toll-free in B.C.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Line: 7-1-1



Non-Health Information and Services

ServiceBC agents provide information about non-health related information and services such as childcare, travel advisories, school closures and more. Service is available 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Service Line: 1-888-268-4319



COVID-19 Information and Supports cont'd



Mental Health Information and/or Counselling Support

Vancouver Coastal Health Child and Youth Mental Health Services

[http://www.vch.ca/your-care/mental-health-substance-use/children-youth-mental-health-services:](http://www.vch.ca/your-care/mental-health-substance-use/children-youth-mental-health-services)

Vancouver Coastal Health Adult Mental Health Services

<http://www.vch.ca/your-care/mental-health-substance-use/accessing-mental-health-substance-use-services>

The Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of BC (Crisis Centre)

<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>

Kelty Mental Health Resource Center

<https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>

Peak Resilience Complete Mental Health Guide during COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://peak-resilience.com/blog/2020/3/15/covid-19-amp-your-mental-health-a-comprehensive-resource-guide>

Anxiety Canada

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/>

CAMH: The Center for Addiction and Mental Health

<http://www.camh.ca/>

Self-compassion (Dr. Kristin Neff)

<https://self-compassion.org/>

Support for Women Experiencing Violence

Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)

<https://www.bwss.org/>

Crisis Line: 1 855 687 1868



Youth Mental Health Websites

Mindfulness for Teens

<http://mindfulnessforteens.com/dzung-vo/dr-dzung-vo/>

Teen Mental Health

<http://teenmentalhealth.org/live/>