



## Mental Health Monday with Dr. Veronica Kelley

We are pleased to share this informative video from Dr. Kelley, who is the Director of Behavioral Health for the County of San Bernardino. Her tips on helping children cope during this crisis are invaluable!

<https://youtu.be/TOoTRrImRys>

### Tips for Helping Your Children Cope

Everyday life — difficult and stressful enough under normal circumstances — has certainly become much more challenging during this medical crisis.

This heightened stress and anxiety not only afflicts adults. Children are perhaps even more influenced by worried parents and caregivers and dramatic changes to their day-to-day routines.

To help parents and others who engage with young people, we asked Dr. Veronica Kelley, director of the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health, to share some suggestions for helping children cope during these unprecedented times. Following are a few of Dr. Kelley's useful tips:

**Stay calm and reassure your kids.** Children look to their caregivers for clues on how to react to a particular situation, so remember that it's not only what you say, but how you say it.

**Limit their screen time.** Many young people are attending school remotely, so it's neither possible nor desirable to ban the use of computers, smartphones and iPads. However, you should encourage children to reduce their online activities and engage in pursuits such as reading, playing board games or card games, cooking, helping around the house, playing a musical instrument or working on crafts.

**Avoid "blaming language."** A virus can make anyone sick — young or old, male or female, black or white. Moreover, those afflicted are not responsible for their condition. Avoid saying things that could lead to stigma.

**Talk about "facts" vs. "feelings."** Separate objective facts from the emotional response to those facts. A fact is that the government has issued stay-at-home orders to help limit the spread of the virus. A feeling is how we feel in response to those orders. Both are legitimate — but it helps to maintain the distinction.

**Maintain open and honest communication.** Let your children know that you want them to ask questions and to share their thoughts and feelings. And let them know that much of what they've heard or read on the internet or social media is based on rumors and false information.

**Keep communications simple.** Speak clearly and directly to your children; now is not the time to get cute or to use clever metaphors. Provide information that is not only truthful, but also appropriate to their age and development level.