

Parenting During a Pandemic

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For ages, the process of Parenting has been considered a work in progress. More importantly, in relation to COVID-19 pandemic and increasing stress factors, more and more parents are feeling overwhelmed. This is due to a variety of factors including drastic changes like disruption of work, introduction of home-schooling, as well as fear invoked by the news and the uncertainty of the situation. As caregivers and role models, many parents are struggling to find their role in these changing times as they are also working to resolve their own issues at the same time. More so, parents are worried that their children are feeling isolated, anxious, or bored.

While some level of stress is normal, parents can help ease the burden of stress by listening to their children's worries and concerns and acknowledging that it is okay to feel upset, worried, or fearful at this time. It is important to acknowledge that as parents, you too may have shared in those feelings.

It's not always easy to recognize when children feel stressed. Here are some clues and changes you can look out for:

- Excessive and frequent crying, tantrums, or irritability in younger children.
- Regressing to immature behaviors like thumb sucking, toileting accidents, bedwetting, hair twirling, or nose picking.
- Becoming clingy
- Excessive rumination, worries, low mood, or mood swings.

- Unexplained physical symptoms like headaches, stomachaches or vague body pain
- Withdrawn or spending a lot of time alone
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleep habits such as difficulty falling asleep or waking up in the middle of the night; nightmares.
- "Acting out", defiant behaviors in adolescents.
- Deteriorating school performance or avoiding schoolwork.
- Difficulty with attention and concentration.
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past.
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Children may not understand COVID-19 and might not fully comprehend its effects on our health and the economy. They are vigilant and observe when their parents are stressed, and react to their parents' emotional state.

Parenting is universally the same in terms of caregiving and providing for children with some variations culturally. Many Asian parents pay little attention to children's inner emotional world. The focus of this article is to stress the expression of physical warmth and emotional availability towards children in this trying time, which may be a challenge for most Asian families. For children of any age, during these trying times, it is of the utmost importance to spend quality time with them. Continue to maintain contact with children regu-

larly, both individually and as a family, while picking up cues from their conversations as well as body language. These cues will help to understand their state of mind which you can then use to have a clear, honest, and gentle conversation in an age appropriate manner to reassure that they are safe. Monitoring their exposure to social media is a must as children who see disturbing images on social media and TV or hear frightening talk of COVID-19 can create worry about their own safety as well as the people they love. During conversations it is important to encourage the child to speak about their knowledge of COVID-19, as you can educate and provide facts in terminology they will understand.

Use language that reflects clarity, honesty, and compassion, while avoiding blame or stigma. Allow them to express any emotions in an age appropriate manner like drawing, journaling or speaking to gently help them derive a conclusion. Encourage them to derive a solution without giving it to them, as this will give them a sense of control, enable them to be mentally resilient, and develop healthy problem-solving skills.

If for some reason, they are not ready at that time, give them space. This will show that you are available to talk with when they are ready. Sometimes, just being in the same room with you may be all a child needs to feel secure. It is alright to share your vulnerable side with them and discuss your efforts of dealing with your own stress and uncer-

ainties, so that they can learn from you, which in turn will help with the emotional wellbeing of your children.

Parents should watch how they discuss certain issues when their children are nearby, because they are known to pick up on their parents' anxieties and start to worry. As difficult as it sounds, remaining calm and collected during these changing times is essential. When parents and caregivers deal with the fears surrounding COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children.

Encourage children to follow basic guidelines of wearing a face-mask, washing hands, and social distancing, while continuing to practice them yourself. Give the children the responsibility of keeping themselves, as well as others, safe. This will instill confidence in the children as they are taking an active role in overcoming the infectious nature of COVID-19

As schools are closed, creating a schedule for learning activities, relaxing, or fun goes a long way in providing structure to your children's day. Using positive words and praise while engaging your child in a constructive manner will keep their focus off stress.

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Stimulus Checks and IRS Direct Deposit



American taxpayers are finally starting to receive the stimulus checks promised by the government to help them through the corona virus crisis.

The IRS has begun sending out the economic impact payments approved by the CARES Act, and on the morning of April 13, social media was flooded with reports of people who had already seen \$1,200 (or more) appear in their bank accounts. On Twitter, the No. 1 trending topic in the U.S. was stimulus deposit. May be some gotten their relief money yet. Understandably, there are a ton of lingering questions about the delivery of the corona virus stimulus checks. Take a deep breath, summon some patience and read on for answers.

Stimulus Checks and IRS Direct Deposit

Remember: Most people don't have to do anything to get their stimulus checks.

The IRS is using direct deposit information from people's 2018 and 2019 taxes to send out its first wave of payments, according to a House Ways and Means Committee memo. In late April, it plans to send out a second wave to Social Security recipients who didn't file taxes but do get their benefits via direct deposit. After that, the IRS will send out paper checks.

So if you've given the IRS your direct deposit information, you will likely receive your stimulus check faster than those who haven't.

If you're a non-filer because your income is too low or you weren't required for another reason, the IRS has a Free File Fill able Forms page where you can enter your payment information.

You will need to provide your date of birth, mailing address, email address, driver's license, bank info and more.

Which Banks Get Stimulus Checks First?

A Treasury Department spokeswoman told MONEY that payments are going out in reverse adjusted gross income order, meaning they're being issued to people with the lowest income first. On

top of that, various banks process payments differently.

For example, many of the reports of successful deposits on April 13 came from customers of the online bank Chime, which said in a blog post that the government notified it last week that over \$375 million in Chime member stimulus payments were "scheduled to be released on April 15." But rather than wait, Chime said it "worked closely with our bank partners to make these funds available immediately." As a result, more than 230,000 Chime customers have already gotten access to their stimulus money.

Even so, Chime noted "additional payments will be arriving in batches, and we won't know the details until we receive the government notifications."

Stimulus check 2020: Round 2, eligibility, schedule and direct deposit

Stimulus check payments are appearing in people's bank accounts, but you might be wondering where yours is, whether you qualify, or when stimulus check 2 is on the way.

Just weeks after the government approved \$2 trillion for a relief package to counter the economic set hardships of the ongoing pandemic, the IRS began sending \$1,200 stimulus check payments to eligible taxpayers via direct deposit and mail. So far, the IRS has delivered checks to around 152 million U.S. citizens, totaling \$158 billion.

Are more stimulus checks coming after the \$1,200 payments?

Congress is currently considering additional stimulus checks. The House passed this bill that includes a second round of \$1,200 stimulus checks, but the Senate has to decide if it will agree to additional stimulus checks before anything can become law. Basically, the momentum is moving in the direction of Congress passing another stimulus check, and the expectation is that House and Senate negotiations will occur in June. To learn more details about the second stimulus check,

Key stimulus plan details and eligibility require-

ments. You can find some key points you should know.

1. You must be a U.S. citizen or qualifying U.S. resident alien to qualify.
2. Individuals with adjusted gross incomes of \$75,000 or less are eligible. Head of household filers who earn \$112,500 or less are eligible. Married couples who file jointly with \$150,000 a year or less are eligible.
3. Those who make more than the above incomes can still receive reduced stimulus checks if you earn \$99,000 per year or less for individuals, \$136,500 per year or less for head of household and \$198,000 per year or less for married filing jointly.
4. Parents or legal guardians can receive \$500 per eligible child.
5. This money won't be counted as income, and you don't have to pay any taxes on it.
6. College students and persons with disabilities are *not* eligible if they were claimed as a dependent on another person's taxes.
7. You can get this payment even if you didn't earn any income.
8. You can get this payment even if you're unemployed or currently receiving funds via the COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Relief program.
9. You can get this payment even if you don't normally file taxes. Use this IRS tool to insert your details and request the \$1,200 stimulus payment.
10. The stimulus payment is sent to either your bank account or via check or debit card. If the IRS doesn't have your information, go here to use the IRS tool to add it.
11. Undocumented immigrants-including those who file tax returns and pay federal taxes-aren't eligible for this stimulus payment.
12. This stimulus payment can be withheld in full and/or reduced to pay delinquent child support payments.

Courtesy: Internet sources

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Encourage your child to play outdoors; a walk or a bike ride for their physical and mental wellbeing as well as aiding with physical immunity.

Break monotony by ensuring frequent small breaks to stretch, walk around, listen to music or dance throughout the day to help your child stay healthy and focused. Keeping realistic expectations like expecting them to stay quiet for 15-20 minutes at a time as opposed to whole day will keep them motivated throughout the day.

Encourage your child to stay in contact with friends and family via social media or phone. Give them a sense of purpose by involving them in any volunteering opportunity available or even incorporating them to help with daily tasks. Encourage them to get adequate sleep by maintaining regular bedtime routines.

Most parents have the skills to deal with their child's stress. The time to seek professional attention is when any change in behavior per-

sists, or when stress is causing serious behavior changes, which are disrupting their day to day activities. Then, it is time to speak to a mental health specialist or their pediatrician for further help. Due to today's drastic life changes it is possible that children now may be at a greater risk of encountering physical and mental issues, so as parents it is important that you are listening and picking up on the social cues of your child so you can help accordingly.

SAMHIN, South Asian Mental Health Initiative & Network, is a non-profit organization that strives to address the mental health needs of the South Asians.

If you know someone that is struggling with stress or has other questions about mental illness or addiction, call us at 732-902-2561 (between 9am and 9pm) or write to us at info@samhin.org. Visit SAMHIN.org to learn more about our programs.



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