**PARENTING NOW**

As the first weeks move towards months of our experience with COVID-19, our initial ideas and plans for coping have been tested. Some of us have received far too much advice and resources, to the point of feeling overwhelmed. Others have felt isolated and perhaps as if their needs are not being addressed or understood. And of course, on any given day, we can feel somewhere between those two realities.

With so much to think about, Connected Beginnings would like to offer some support on staying emotionally well during this stressful time, for the families we serve and the families we call are own.

***Decoding Your Kid’s Behavior in Stressful Times***

Even during the most typical parenting days, we may find our children’s behavior confusing. During times of stress, when a parent’s patience, attention span, and frustration-level are strained— figuring them out may seem impossible.

Sometimes when children “act out” we want to ignore it and hope they just cut it out. However, “acting out” is a child’s way of communicating. Acknowledging a child’s feelings—even when those feelings might be expressed through a tantrum or other explosive behavior – is an important step in connecting to a child and helping them manage their own feelings.

Here are some basics on understanding and responding to behavior that can provide some insight – and ***a little breathing room*** – for your children and for you.

1. Take a deep breath and ask yourself, “What is this kid trying to tell me?”
2. Ask your child to stop for a second and take a deep breath with you.
3. Take another breath together and wonder aloud what your child is feeling. “Whoa, sounds like your mad about something.” Trying to name a child’s feelings can help them understand that you see that they have a need or feeling that is getting overwhelming.
4. Take another deep breath and listen to what your child is saying or doing to help you understand. Maybe let them know that you have big feelings too sometimes – that make you want to act out.
5. Let them know clearly and calmly that even when feelings are overwhelming, there are other ways to express themselves that cause no harm to self, others, or property. As Dr. T. Berry Brazelton said, “I’m sorry. I love you, but not what you are doing.” Give them a simple alternative that they can do right away to express their feelings. For instance, “You can’t shove your sister, but you can punch a pillow.”
6. Give them a hug, or a high-five, or a fist tap – anything that lets them know they are loved and are allowed to try again.

For more information on responding to children’s challenging behavior in stressful times, click [here.](https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/english-tipsheet4-updated.pdf)

Looking for more on the topic? Here is NPR’s LifeKit podcast on the subject

[When Will This Be Over? Sesame Workshop's Tips For Parenting During A Pandemic](https://www.npr.org/2020/05/08/853142325/when-will-this-be-over-sesame-workshops-tips-for-parenting-during-a-pandemic)