

YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER
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Life Lessons for Children



FiRST + AiD FOR FEELiNGS™

**A Workbook to Help Kids* Cope
During the Coronavirus Pandemic**

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SCHOLASTIC

**and you!*

A COMPANION GUIDE FOR GROWN-UPS



Introduction

The poet Maya Angelou wrote, “As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.”

As parents and caregivers, we know this well. We work to stay strong and healthy so we can take the best care of the children in our lives from infancy through adulthood. We try to model the behaviors that will support their healthy development and well-being. And with a full heart we teach children the social and emotional lessons we believe will help them navigate their lives with joy and fulfillment. From the time we first set eyes on these little ones, we want to protect them and equip them for life’s challenges.

But no one could have prepared us to help children face the unprecedented circumstances and life-altering changes we’re experiencing now.

That’s why we created **First Aid for Feelings: A Workbook to Help Kids Cope During the Coronavirus Pandemic**—and why we offer this companion booklet to help you guide children through the workbook. We invite you to:

Explore: The questions and activities in the First Aid for Feelings workbook make for great conversation starters about what a child is feeling and thinking, including the possible causes.

- Give children permission to feel all emotions. Encourage them to be open by being the role model.
- Share your own emotions, use welcoming body language, and use a calm voice. That will help children feel validated.
- Be curious, open, and accepting of everything you hear. Again, you are the role model.

Strategize: Think together about what the child can do to manage uncomfortable feelings. Each child is different, so try to find out what this child needs in this moment. A breathing exercise? A walk? Perhaps cooking together, or playing a game, or practicing positive self-talk.

At this time when there are so many aspects of our lives that we cannot control, it’s so helpful for children to have tangible strategies that help them feel more in control.

When you listen to a child with empathy, you will continue to learn what they need. Problem solve with them and support them in using helpful emotion regulation strategies.

Follow Up: Check in with them regularly. See if they are using the strategies that you came up with together, and if they find them helpful!

A Letter to Grown-Ups

Childhood is an amazing time of discovery. Nearly every moment of a child's life offers opportunities to teach important emotional intelligence skills, such as caring, listening, empathy, problem-solving, self-regulation, and resilience. That holds particularly true in challenging times such as these.

During the current pandemic, families have been thrust into extraordinary circumstances that may be life-changing, with short- and long-term effects on children's well-being. Past experience during global crises has taught us that caring grown-ups in children's lives can make an enormous difference by providing safety, comforting reassurance, age-appropriate information, and helpful guidance. Helping children learn to be smart about feelings can help alleviate their emotional stress, improve concentration, boost their immune system, and enhance brain development.

This **First Aid for Feelings** workbook for children was designed to help you do just that. By using the simple coping strategies found in this workbook, you can encourage children to express thoughts, questions, and feelings. These life skills may help reduce and manage children's stress or anxiety, and provide some sense of control within their changing lives.

Children may be upset by seeing people wearing masks, overhearing anxious conversations, being physically distant from people they care about, and having their routines completely disrupted. It's important to observe their behavior while listening carefully to what they are saying. Once their immediate physical needs have been met, meeting children's emotional needs is key to helping them deal with their confusion, anxiety, or fear.

The emotional support offered through this workbook will provide resilience strategies that will serve children well beyond the current crisis. These activities will help children learn to cope with the everyday challenges of growing up and will help equip them with the emotional tools for a happy, healthy, and successful life.

All of us are working to ensure our children's physical and emotional security during this challenging time—and we will get through this together!



Denise Daniels, RN, MS
Founder of the National Childhood Grief Institute



Just For You

The **First Aid for Feelings** workbook was written to help children cope with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

This companion book is designed to guide you every page of the way—enabling you to support children as they notice, name, express, and begin to cope with the wide range of feelings they have after living with the ongoing upheaval and uncertainty of the pandemic.

As you go through this guide, you may also learn a few things about how you're feeling, too!

We hope this will be a source of comfort for your entire family, through this crisis and beyond.

This workbook is for YOU!

My name is _____

I live in _____ City _____ State _____

Today's date is _____

A Changing World

The world is changing all the time. Some changes happen suddenly and last for a short time, and others are longer. Even though change may seem scary, it can also be a chance for you to learn and grow.

The big change that lots of people are talking about right now is the coronavirus. If you're like most kids, this may be a pretty confusing time for you. Maybe your school has been temporarily closed, or maybe a family member is worried about not working, or perhaps you're upset because you can't get together with your friends.



Use the space below to list some of the changes you are currently facing.



Make It Your Own

To the left is a section of the workbook that children can make their own. Just by writing their names, children will feel ownership at a time when so many things feel out of their control. They will also be able to revisit the book in the future and remember what they were going through during this time.



Don't Forget Yourself!

Children are going through changes—and so are you!

Share some of those changes and how you feel about them.

Remember that all feelings are okay—and that it helps to talk about them.

When you share some of your feelings, children will recognize that you are in this together.



Care, Protect, Teach

Insight: As parents and caregivers, we want to protect our children from suffering and harm. While we can't always do that, we can equip them with the emotional intelligence skills that build resilience, and that will help them navigate life's challenges.

Insight: Here's how you can protect the children you love and help reduce the negative effects of adversity: Be the caring the adult with whom the child can develop a warm, responsive, and trusting relationship. Help them learn strategies for managing strong emotions and assist them in developing the skills to make and keep friends. This will help them now, and for the rest of their lives.

Insight: As parents and caregivers, we, too, can feel overwhelmed! Talk to other grown-ups—it can really help.



Science Says

We know more about how COVID-19 behaves than ever before.

According to the CDC, these are the best ways to keep you and your family safe.

1. Wear a mask in public (this does not apply to children under 2).
2. Wash your hands a lot, for 20 seconds each time.
3. Use hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol if you can't wash.
4. Stay 6 feet away from others.
5. It's okay to say, "I'm following the mask recommendation" or "Let's keep a safe distance between us."

What I Know... and Want to Know

Your family all love you and want to keep you safe. They can be your very best source for information. Lots of kids are wondering, what IS the coronavirus? Scientists tell us that the novel (or new) coronavirus is a different type of virus. It's a tiny germ that can spread to people and make them sick. That's why we are taking so many safety precautions—like asking you not to touch your face and to wash your hands frequently. Now is an important time for you to have information about the virus.

Use the space below to tell what you have heard about the coronavirus.

Asking questions is a good way to help you understand what is happening. There are no wrong questions, so don't be afraid to ask! There are lots of places you can go to find the answers to your questions, like asking a grown-up, your teacher, your doctor, the City Hall where you live, the internet, or the library (online for now)!

Make a list of some of the questions you may have:



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Do This Together

Help children write down the things they've heard about the coronavirus and any questions they have. These questions should offer you some insight into their level of understanding, and how their ideas about the pandemic may be affecting their general mood.

Insight: Too much bad news can increase anxiety. Generally, it is not a good idea to have the news constantly playing in the background, or to have most conversations focus on the virus. Much of what is going on in our world right now is too complex for young children to process.

Insight: Keep in mind the importance of balancing honesty and accuracy with an awareness of what's appropriate for each child based on their age and general temperament (e.g., some children are more sensitive than others to changes in their environment).

What To Do When I Feel Afraid

If you're like a lot of kids, you may be feeling a little overwhelmed. We really aren't sure what's going to happen next, and that can feel scary. When you are afraid, here are some things you can do to feel better.



Circle the ones you would like to try.

Turn off the TV!

Drink a glass of cold water.

Listen to calming music.

Write in a feelings journal.

Talk to a caring grown-up about feeling afraid.

Take some deep breaths and exhale slowly.

Tell yourself to be brave and that you'll be okay.

Curl up and read your favorite book.

Get the facts.

Draw a picture of what you are afraid of.

Get and give hugs (virtually, if needed!)

Your feelings send messages to your brain that affect how you think and act. When you express them, others can understand what you are going through. **Remember:** All feelings are okay... but keeping them inside can cause aches and pains.

Circle the feelings you are having right now.



When things seem scary and you tremble with fear, tell yourself to be calm and your courage will appear!

Loved
Frustrated
Trusting
Bored
Afraid
Proud

Sick
Grouchy
Happy
Lonely
Brave
Relieved
Tired
Worried

Other Feelings:

Facing Fear

This can be a very scary time for children. Acknowledge that you sometimes feel afraid, too. And let kids know that there are things they can do to help when they have these feelings of fear.

- Ask which strategies on the list they want to try when they feel afraid.
- Ask if they have other ideas that are not on the list.
- Help the kids circle the words that express the feelings they are having now.



Insight:

Paying attention to a child's emotions includes monitoring their feelings of safety and security. Listen beneath the words to what the child's underlying concerns may be (for example: "Is anyone in my family going to get sick?").

Taking Care of Family

Now would be a good time to have a family meeting to talk about how your family members are taking care of their health. It's also a good time to practice certain ways you can take care of yourself.

Circle the ones you are already doing.

Stand six giant steps away from your friends or neighbors.

Wash your hands before you eat, after using the bathroom, and after sneezing or coughing.

Wave instead of shaking hands.

Wash your hands for 20 seconds (sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" two times to make sure you're washing long enough).

Call or video chat with your friends whenever you are lonely.

Cough and sneeze into your elbow.

Eat a healthy diet with lots of fruit and vegetables, and be sure to drink plenty of water.

MAKE SURE you don't touch your face, eyes, or nose.

Most of all, listen to your body. If you don't feel well, tell a grown-up how you are feeling.

Exercise your body and your brain.

Get lots of rest, even on weekends. Rest will help protect your body.



Healthy Mind, Healthy Body

In stressful times like these, it's especially important to take good care of your physical health. For you and everyone in your household, this means doing some kind of daily exercise, getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods, and contacting your doctor about any health concerns, even if office visits are limited.

It's equally important to think about your family's emotional health and well-being. For most people that would mean having a home filled with love, laughter, kindness, compassion, joy, hope. That may sound idealistic, but it's something we can strive for.

Research tells us that emotional health and well-being are key factors in good decision-making and healthy relationships. When you feel good emotionally it can even help you maintain good physical health, and vice-versa.

Help your child circle the strategies that you and your family can use to be healthy.



The Family Charter

Take time to have regular family meetings and talk about how everyone is feeling and any questions they may have. Below are some thought starters and activities to consider:

How do we want to feel as a family?

This may include words like: loved, respected, included, safe, happy, calm, grateful, and playful.

What do we need to do to experience these feelings more frequently?

Think of specific actions you can take. For example, being 'nice' is pretty vague. But 'smiling,' 'saying good morning,' 'knocking on the door before entering' are specific and observable behaviors.

Create a Family Charter

- Draw up a list of the top 5 feelings that are important to your household, and the specific actions people can take to bring about those feelings.
- Be creative! Use your family's talents and have fun. The Charter can be big or small, colorful, or filled with drawings.
- Once the Family Charter is complete, everyone must sign it!
- Display the Charter prominently in your home.
- Ask each family member to set a daily or weekly goal to uphold the Charter. Check in weekly as a family to discuss how it's going.

Make a Daily Plan

When you are going through big changes, it's helpful to stick to your normal routine. Do your homework every day, get some fresh air and exercise, and have regular mealtimes and bedtimes.

If you don't already have a daily schedule, use this chart to create one. Ask a grown-up to help you list all the things you do each day and what time of day you do them.



Morning

Afternoon

Evening

Calming Corner

A Calming Corner is a safe and comfy place you can go when you need to calm down. Having time to yourself is important during times of stress.

Circle what you want to add to your Calming Corner.

Beanbags

Squeeze ball

Journal and crayons

Glitter jar

Pinwheel (for taking
slow, deep breaths)

Fish tank
with goldfish

Soft rug

Other ideas: _____

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Comfort in Routine

Humans need routines and structure to function well. Consistency is especially important for children; it helps them feel safe, which is more important than ever now, when the world feels upside down!

Consistency and predictability are good for adults, too. We suggest maintaining what we can from old routines that worked—like making the bed every morning—while creating new routines appropriate to our current situation.

Here are some questions to think about individually and then discuss in a family meeting:

- What are the personal routines that still work for you and that you still enjoy?
- What are new routines we've established now that we have to stay home more?
- Are there new family routines you'd like to try but haven't yet?

And here are a few things you might try as you establish routines:

- Find a song that you can all sing or music that energizes you when you're doing chores.
- Hold a family-feelings check-in at breakfast and dinner, or before bed.
- Create a Calming Corner or a Peaceful Place: This is a special area with a comfy space to sit and relax where you can listen to mellow music, read quietly, practice mindful breathing, journal, or manage your thoughts.

People Care About Me!

In difficult times, it's comforting to spend extra time with those you love and care about. Reading together, playing board games, working on a puzzle together, or if allowed, hiking or going for a walk or bike ride are some good ideas to help your family to stay connected. **Use this space below to make a list of all the people who care about you and what you like to do together. (You might be surprised at how many people there are!)**

People Who Care **What We Do Together**



Stay Connected

As human beings, we're wired to connect—and human connection is particularly important now. You may feel over-extended and need alone time, while your children need connection and want to play. Or vice versa. Can all of you get your needs met? Yes, of course, but maybe not all at the same time!

Many families create schedules where parents and children plan together time as well as alone time, every day. Schedules help each of you protect and fulfill your different needs.

If you begin and end each day with intentional connection time, you and your family reap the continuous emotional benefits of feeling safe and cared about.





Finding and Giving Help

Mr. Rogers famously said: *When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."*

All of us need help sometimes, especially if we're scared or having an emergency. It's important for children to know that there are grown-ups around who can help them at such times.

It's good to remind children that you will always love them and will always do your best to protect them. And sometimes we all need to go outside our family for help—to our neighbors, friends, or professional helpers, like the ones listed here.

You might begin by sharing a story about a time when someone outside your family went out of their way to help you.

Modeling helping behavior will inspire your children. What is one way that you can model being a helper?

Cultivate your children's natural instincts toward empathy, kindness, and generosity: Talk about ways they and you might help others in the family or community.

The Helpers Who Keep Me Safe

It's important for you to know that many caring and courageous heroes are working hard to keep you healthy and safe. When there are emergencies, people always come together to help one another, especially the kids, and that's a good thing for you to know! Some of the people who are working hard to keep you and your family healthy are:

All the grown-ups
in your life who are
protecting you

Teachers and principals

Bus drivers

Health care workers,
including doctors,
nurses, and others

Men and women serving
in the National Guard

Other countries

Scientists

People who work at your
local grocery store

The president, governor,
mayor, and leaders
of other government

Emergency responders

Public workers who keep
our cities clean

Police and firefighters



Let Those Feelings Out!

Remember when we talked about expressing your feelings? Here are some good ways for you to let your feelings out.

Circle some of the ones that work best for you, and add other ideas.



Draw a picture of how you're feeling right now.

Laugh out loud.

Talk to someone who cares about you.

Make a feelings collage from old magazines: cut out pictures that show people feeling different emotions.

Find a quiet place to meditate (think calming thoughts).

Send positive thoughts about those who have been affected.

Make a happy memories scrapbook.

Read a book about feelings, such as...

Make your favorite meal with a grown-up.

Write in a feelings journal.

Do something creative, like make a piece of jewelry, a sculpture out of clay or art dough, or a cheerful card for someone.

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Do This Together

Young children rarely “edit” themselves—whatever they feel tends to come right out, in one way or another!

With big emotions like anger, sadness, or fear, children will need guidance from you on how to channel those feelings into appropriate and productive expressions. (Because anger and frustration are so common among young kids and can be so challenging for parents to deal with, we offer additional suggestions on that topic on the following page.)

Even with positive or joyful emotions, kids can sometimes go a little overboard! We’ve all seen those “spinning” displays as children race around trying to express their excitement or glee. It’s wonderful, but sometimes they need a little reining in before they hurt themselves!

To help you help them, we’ve come up with a list of activities that allow children to let their feelings out in socially appropriate ways that also benefit the child (and others). Circle your own choices along with your child, while asking questions such as:

- Which of these activities might be best when you’re sad? Happy? Angry? Scared?
- Close your eyes and picture yourself doing this activity. How do you feel?
- Do you have other ways to express yourself? Let’s write those down together.

Sometimes It's ANNOYING!

If you're like most kids, there might be times when you feel frustrated or even angry because you aren't able to be with your friends or do the things you would like to do. It's natural to feel this way when everything around you seems upside down. It's important to find healthy ways to express angry feelings. Here are some things you can do to help you manage those really big feelings.

Circle the ones that work best for you, and add other ideas.

Get some exercise—it's the #1 stress buster!

If allowed, run around outside. It's a great way to let off steam.

Write a letter to yourself about why you're feeling frustrated.

Watch a funny movie.

Plan to have some future fun. Decide what you would like to do when you are able to do it with your friends again.

Yell into your pillow.

Take a s-l-o-w deep breath, then exhale s-l-o-w-l-y. Do this several times.

Listen to loud music while stomping around.

Pound some play clay.

Talk to a caring grown-up about why you're angry.

Close your eyes and imagine you're in one of your favorite places.



Emotional Strategies

It's tricky to express big emotions in ways that get our needs met without alienating others. And it doesn't come naturally—you need an important set of skills. Even as adults, many of us would say we could do better. Your children will need your help learning to recognize their feelings and expressing them through words and socially acceptable actions. In other words, they need strategies for expressing and managing their feelings.

Remember that before you can teach your children, you need to learn these strategies yourself. Think about :

- What have you been feeling? How have you been expressing it? Have you found it possible to talk to someone about your feelings?
- Research shows that certain strategies tend to build emotional health:
 1. Changing how you *think* about something in order to change how you feel
 2. Taking a problem-solving approach
 3. Getting physical exercise or doing a relaxation practice
 4. Talking to a friend or loved one
- What are your go-to strategies for expressing and managing your feelings?

When you're feeling angry, take a deep breath and count to ten... and before you know it, you'll feel better again!



Same and Different

Remember when we talked about change? Some changes are easy, but some are harder. Maybe you have just moved, or you are going to a new school, or your family members are living in different places. Those can be really big changes for everyone! **If you are going through a big change, you may use the chart below to talk about your big change, and then fill in the chart.**

**Things that
will change**

**Things that
will stay the same**



Coping With Change

For adults, change can be exciting when it's something you've sought: starting a new job, for example, or moving into a new home. But when change is happening outside your control or against your wishes, it can be upsetting, even frightening. So, think how distressing it is for children, who have no control over their circumstances, and who crave consistency. They need reassurance that some things—like your love—will never change.

To prepare for your conversation with your child about change, first think about your own answers to these questions:

- What *has* changed for you?
- What *has not* changed for you?
- How did you get used to the change—what did you do?
- What feelings do you have about the current changes?

Every ending brings
a new beginning . . .
and good memories
last forever!





Building Resilience

Although we don't know what the new normal will be, we can join our children in visualizing what we're eager to do again—and what we hope the world will look like in the future.

As parents and caretakers, we want our children to be able to adapt to both the pleasant and unpleasant changes that life will inevitably bring. And as the grown-ups, we have a profound influence on our children through our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors—they are watching and listening to us all the time. So we can be the role models for building resilience, which scientists tell us can be developed over an entire lifetime. Demonstrate resilience for children by:

- Maintaining a network of social support
- Sharing your feelings and talking about how you manage them
- Helping children recognize, name, and regulate emotions
- Practicing mindful meditation (which helps reduce anxiety)
- Taking control through everyday actions, such as doing the dishes
- Being positive-minded about the future
- Doing something for other people
- Telling a story about a hard time where you recognize how strong you have been

Your loving presence and care provide children with the stability and security they need during these times of tremendous change.

Looking Forward

Many people are upset about the changes caused by the coronavirus. But with all of us working together, in time things will settle down and get back to normal again. In times like this, it's really helpful to make plans to look forward to in the future.



List or draw some of the things you would like to do with your family and friends once things get back to normal.

Take Your Feelings Temperature



How Are You Feeling?

Checking in with your feelings helps children (and adults, too!) become more aware of their emotions and the impact of those emotions on their decisions, their relationships, and their well-being.

Remember: When you can 'name' your feeling, you can 'tame' your feeling! That means when children (and yes, adults, too) experience an overwhelming emotion like anger or fear, there is a helpful strategy you can use to keep that feeling under control, so it doesn't control *you*.

Use this Feelings Thermometer to keep track of your moods... and be sure to let all the people who care about you know how you're doing!



Congratulations on all the hard work you have done in your First Aid for Feelings workbook. You have learned many important things about how to take care of yourself in difficult times. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done!



The End—and the Beginning!

We have come to the end of our workbook—but you're just beginning the conversations about feelings that you can have with the children in your life!

We hope that we've provided activities, strategies, and discussion-starters that will help all of you recognize, name, and manage the wide variety of emotions you are feeling in this complicated time. Remember: There's no such thing as a "wrong" emotion—it's how you handle it that counts!

We wish you and your family a safe journey, and we all look forward to better days ahead.

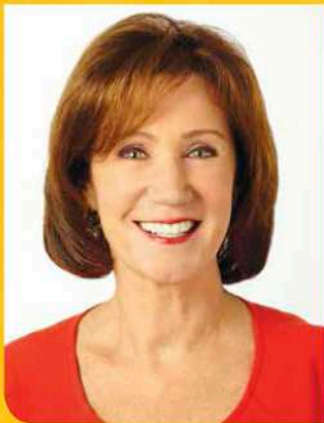
Further Resources

Scholastic Learn at Home
[scholastic.com/learnathome](https://www.scholastic.com/learnathome)

Teaching Our World
[scholastic.com/coronavirus](https://www.scholastic.com/coronavirus)

**Yale Child Study Center+Scholastic Collaborative
for Child & Family Resilience**
medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/scholasticcollab

The Collaborative for Child & Family Resilience recognizes the power of story and social connectedness to foster resilience among children, families, and communities in times of crisis. We are committed to helping children and families develop coping strategies, create supportive networks, and rewrite the narratives of their futures.



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Denise Daniels, RN, MS, is a Peabody Award-winning broadcast journalist, child development expert, and author, whose workbooks have reached more than 15 million schoolchildren. She is frequently called upon for her expertise and parenting advice during times of national and global crisis, emergencies, and natural disasters.

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The Moodsters help children learn how to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions.

www.themoodsters.com

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