

Children's Mental Health Forecast:

Expect some misbehavior, melt downs, and back talk this week!

- None of us do well with having our routines changed and it's even harder on our children and young people.
- This is a time of great stress for every member of society and that includes our children.
- Children and young people express their stress through their behaviors.
- They are feeling sad about missing their friends, teachers, and activities.
- They are feeling scared because this is a stressful time for the world.
- They are feeling bored and confused because they are not used to being home all day.
- Instead of telling you this in words, they tell you through melt downs, sulking, and not following house rules.

What to do?

Now is the time to be **flexible**. It's important to respond to your child's emotions with **empathy** and focus on **creating connection**. In order to avoid unnecessary power struggles, practice acknowledging the emotion driving your child or teen's behavior or attitude:

- "You feel annoyed about coming down for dinner. I hear you."
- "You feel disappointed, we can't go to basketball. I hear you."
- "You feel mad that I made you stop playing video games. It's hard to stop when you're having fun."

For older children and pre-teens, you might even say,

- "I'm disappointed about missing out on things too."

Give Emotions an Outlet

You are the outlet for the storm of emotions children and young people are feeling.

- **Let** young children **tantrum** in a safe place (on carpet, in a crib, in your lap) and then comfort them when they tire out.
- **Let** teenagers **slam** their doors and then check in with them once they have calmed down.

It is ok to take breaks from one another as much as your space allows. It is better for both of you to calm down before trying to make amends.

Re-Connecting after Conflict

Conflict is normal and inevitable especially right now. However, it is very important to **re-connect** with your child or teen after you've had conflict.

- **Model apologizing**, "I'm sorry I lost my temper and yelled."
- Give your child or teen an opportunity to talk about what they are feeling. "You sure got mad when I asked you to do your homework. Tell me what made you so angry." Then listen without judgment to their explanation.
- If your child or teen has exploded or called you a name, provide them with a way to **make amends**. For example, give them a small chore around the house. This helps children to let go of uncomfortable feelings when they recognize they've made a mistake.