

# 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.