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Family Conflict

Continued from page 11

care of your body and build a strong immune system, you must take the same care for your mental health, as the state of your mental health will directly impact your relationships and how you communicate with others.

You may feel waves of emotions during this time and Ramsey says that this is normal. It is normal to be emotional. It is normal to be sad and angry and scared while watching the news. But Ramsey asks, "What are you doing with those emotions? Are you taking them to a positive space or a negative space?" Are you bottling those emotions and lashing out on those close to you or are you recognizing your emotions and finding healthy outlets for them. You may not have your typical coping mechanisms available right now, like seeing friends or going to the gym, so it is imperative to find new and creative outlets, such as listening to music, meditating, or exploring nature. And you do not have to do this alone. Families are allowed to have fun together, too. This is a unique opportunity to find new ways to interact, while coping with life's stresses together. Use it as a way to build your family stronger.

Ramsey says, "Anxiety is a natural and protective physiological response. Anxiety is valuable in order to protect you from harm." But how far does it go? When you are no longer basing your reactions on logic, anxiety can paralyze you.

Debbie Hess, M.A., Valley Youth House's Program Supervisor for our Family Based Mental Health program says that when you feel overwhelmed by uncertainty, just take it one day at a time. She suggests that both adults and kids should keep as much of the same structure each day as possible. "We recognize that close proximity can lead to challenges like family conflict, anxiety, and stress," so Hess recommends focusing on your breathing to slow yourself down when you are starting to feel those feelings come on. Ramsey says "discuss one topic at a time. Separate your arguments to one at a time. That will help situations from escalating."

Safety planning is now more important than ever. Be intentional about coping strategies before conflicts arise. How will you cope? Where is a safe place to go to calm down? Hess says to leave the environment where the conflict occurs, if possible, and to make sure each family member has their own designated space to decompress. Go to a separate room or take a walk, for example. Do that before conflicts become a larger problem.

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