

older children and teens, but it's a good idea to keep them in a reasonable range so the sleep-wake cycle isn't thrown off. Too little sleep makes it more challenging to learn and to deal with emotions. Remember to **turn off cell phones** and other mobile devices an hour before bedtime.

## Use positive discipline

Everyone is more anxious and worried during the pandemic. Younger children may not have the words to describe their feelings. They're more likely to act out their stress, anxiety or fear through their behavior (which can, in turn, upset parents, particularly if they are already stressed). Older children and teens may be extra irritable as they miss out on time with friends and special events being cancelled.

Some ways you can help your children manage their emotions and behavior:

- **Redirect bad behavior.** Sometimes children misbehave because they are bored or don't know any better. Find something else for them to do.
- **Creative play.** Suggest your children draw pictures of ways your family is staying safe. Make a collage and hang it up to remind everyone. Or, build an indoor fort or castle to keep the germs at bay, bringing in favorite stuffed animals or toys.
- **Direct your attention.** **Attention**--to reinforce good behaviors and discourage others--is a powerful tool. Notice good behavior and point it out, praising success and good tries. Explaining clear expectations, particularly with **older children**, can help with this.
- **Use rewards & privileges** to reinforce good behaviors (completing school assignments, chores, getting along with siblings, etc.) that wouldn't normally be given during less stressful times.
- **Know when not to respond.** As long as your child isn't doing something dangerous and gets attention for good behavior, ignoring bad behavior can be an effective way of stopping it.
- **Use time-outs.** This discipline tool works best by warning children they will get a **time-out** if they don't stop. Remind them what they did wrong in as few words—and with as little emotion—as possible. Then, remove them from the situation for a pre-set length of time (1 minute per year of age is a good guide).

## Special Time In

Even with everyone home together 24/7, set aside some special time with each child. You choose the time, and let your child choose the activity. Just 10 or 20 minutes of your undivided attention, even if only once every few days, will mean a lot to your child. Keep cell phones off or on silent so you don't get distracted.

- **Avoid physical punishment.** Spanking, hitting, and other forms of physical or

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