

PEACE, BE STILL

A Family Guide to Living in Crazy Days

About this resource: This is a Bible-based resource for parents and children in the COVID-19 pandemic. It is informed by best practices in mental health as well as two decades of experience using trauma healing worldwide with churches from every tradition. *Peace, Be Still* is designed for families with children ages 8–12, but can be easily adapted for other ages.

What's inside

Note to Parents.....	2
1. Story time	3
2. What is a coronavirus?.....	4
3. How can we protect ourselves and others?	5
4. What can we do while we wait for things to get better?.....	7
5. What does God say?.....	10
6. Closing activity—Bring your worries to Jesus.....	12

By Margi McCombs PhD with Harriet Hill PhD. [Trauma Healing Institute](https://traumahealinginstitute.org).

© 2020 American Bible Society. First edition, April 2020 (pre-publication edition)

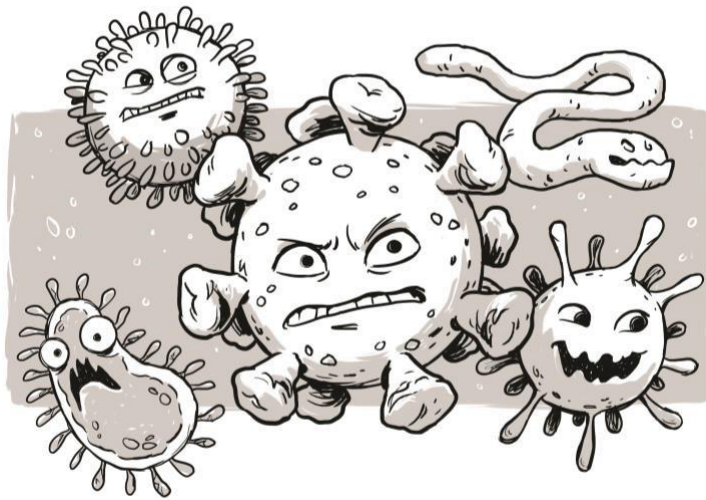
ISBN 978-1-58516-906-1, ABS Item 125015

This resource may be used on its own or paired with material in *Beyond Disaster: A Survivor's Guide for Spiritual First Aid* (ISBN 978-1-58516-292-5; ABS item 124851). *Permission is granted to make copies of this resource without changes. Visit [BeyondDisaster.Bible](https://beyonddisaster.bible) for the latest version.*

Illustrations by Ian Dale. Design by Robert Giorgio.

Scripture texts: **NRSV:** *New Revised Standard Version Bible* © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. **ESV:** *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. **NLT:** *Holy Bible, New Living Translation* © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

Visit [DisasterRelief.Bible](https://disasterrelief.bible) for this and other resources on disaster recovery. If you have questions, feedback, or a story to share, contact info@traumahealinginstitute.org.



Note to Parents

This booklet is intended to help you help your children to feel safe during this time of uncertainty and change. You are probably spending more time together these days, feeling the stress of disruption and disappointment, and wondering when things will get back to normal. Your children are feeling the same way.

We invite you to use this guide in a way that fits into your family's natural rhythm. It has six sections that you can schedule in any way that seems best for you. *If you have young children, or those who may be additionally traumatized by the reference to death, consider omitting the part of the story that is in italics.* However, if children of any age have questions about death, respond truthfully and in an age-appropriate way.

Listening to your children is one of the best ways to help them in unsettled times. Smaller children may not have words to describe their feelings, so it can help to encourage them to draw and then talk with them about their drawings (or what they have been playing). You may find the [Beyond Disaster](#) booklet helpful for additional ways to help children through this time.

Your children's drawings from this guided experience could be encouraging or bring a smile to many others around the world during this health crisis. We invite you to post them on Instagram, tagged #thikids.

We pray that you stay safe and healthy, and know God's peace in the midst of this crisis. *The Trauma Healing Institute*

MATERIALS NEEDED

- White printer or notebook paper
- Colored pencils or markers

- Sticky notes or small pieces of paper
- Some kind of tape
- A small box or jar with lid (as a “worry box”)
- A small cross. You can make a cross from wooden rulers, dowels, or sticks

1. Story time

Hard Times

Logan slumped down into the couch. He was angry and bored. He was stuck at home with his nine-year-old sister Emma and his mom. He couldn’t go anywhere, he couldn’t see his friends, he couldn’t take Chester to the dog park, and worst of all, his soccer practices and games were cancelled. Like forever. He had no idea how long this crazy situation was going to last.

“What’re you doing?” asked Emma as she sat down on the couch next to him. “Go away,” said Logan. “I don’t feel like talking.” Logan was twelve and felt much older than Emma. He was sure she didn’t have grownup problems like he did.

“I heard that,” said Mom, coming into the living room and glaring at Logan. “We’re tired of your grumpy attitude and how you take it out on us. We’re all having a hard time with this, not just you.”

“Yeah,” Emma said, shrugging her shoulders. “I just wondered if you wanted to play a game or something. I miss my friends, and I’m tired of staying home all the time.”

Logan shoved his earbuds into his ears and slumped down even more, a worried, angry look on his face. Emma decided to go into the kitchen to find a snack.

As she grabbed the bread and took the peanut butter from the refrigerator, her mom walked into the kitchen. “Hungry?” asked Mom. She slipped an arm around Emma’s shoulders. She looked tired. “Hey, when you have your sandwich together, can you bring it out to the living room? I need to talk with you and Logan about something important.”

A few minutes later, Logan and Emma were sitting on the couch and Mom was in the big armchair opposite from them. Logan and Emma were feeling nervous, wondering what Mom had to talk with them about. “First of all, I need to apologize to you, Logan,” said Mom. “I snapped at you just like you did to Emma. This is all getting to me, too, but I don’t have to take my frustrations out on you. I’m sorry.”

She sighed. “And now I have some bad news to tell you. Grandma was admitted to the hospital today because her cough is worse and she was having a hard time breathing. I’m sure she will be taken care of very well, but we are not allowed to go see her right now.” Emma burst into tears. “Is she going to die?” she asked between sobs.

“We all hope not,” said Mom. “We will pray that her body is strong enough to fight this virus. I heard about a 97-year-old lady who was able to recover from it and go home! Grandma is pretty strong, so I think she has a fighting chance to get better.”

Mom moved across the room and sat down next to Emma. She gave her a side hug. “And you know, Emma, that we all are going to die one day, but we know that when that happens, Jesus promises us that we will go to be with God forever.” Emma nodded her head.

“Ugh! I hate what’s happened to our lives!” said Logan. “When will things get better? I’m sorry I’m so grumpy, but I’m worried. I’m worried that we’re going to get sick, and I’m worried that you will lose your job like my friend’s mom did, and now I’m worried about Grandma.”

“This is hard for everyone, isn’t it?” Mom said. “Things are tough now. But you know, I can promise you a couple of things: it won’t last forever, and as long as we are living in these crazy days, God will be with us in them. We will face this together, and with God’s help, we will get through it.”

Emma had stopped crying and now Logan sat up straighter. “So, what do you think about making some pizza for dinner?” asked Mom. “I’ll make the crust and you two decide what toppings you’d like.” Together they walked into the kitchen.

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Why didn’t Logan feel like talking to Emma?
2. Why did Mom snap at Logan?
3. Do your feelings ever make you impatient with others?
4. *Why do you think they weren’t allowed to go see Grandma in the hospital?*
5. Is your life now like Emma and Logan’s?



2. What is a coronavirus?

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

Do you know what a virus is? What do you know about the coronavirus?

After your children have answered, you can add anything from the list below that seems relevant.

Talking points:

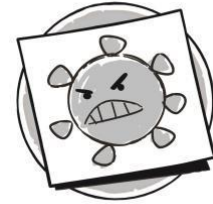
- A virus is a very tiny germ that you can’t see. It can’t live on its own for very long, but must get into a living body to survive. Lots of diseases you may have heard about are caused by viruses, like chicken pox, measles, colds, and the flu.
- Recently, a new virus that doctors and scientists had never seen before showed up and began to infect people in China. It is a new coronavirus, so named because of its shape that looks like it has a spikey crown all over it. You can only see it under a powerful microscope.
- There are several types of coronavirus, including the virus that causes the common cold.



- This new coronavirus causes a disease called COVID-19. Doctors are still learning about it.
- Recently, this virus has made a lot of people sick. Most people who get COVID-19 get better on their own, but some people have to go to the hospital. Some of them die.
- This virus has spread to many countries all over the world. This spread of the virus is called a pandemic.
- Doctors and scientists, nurses and helpers are working very hard to help people stay healthy.

ACTIVITY—DRAW A CORONAVIRUS

Give each member of the family a piece of white printer or notebook paper and colored pencils or markers. Have them draw their idea of what a coronavirus looks like. Find a place to hang up or post their drawings.



ACTIVITY—TRUE OR FALSE GAME

Make two large signs: one that says TRUE, and the other that says FALSE. Tape or place them in opposite sides of the room.

As you read the following statements, family members run to either side of the room depending on whether they think the statement is true or false.



1. This virus is making people sick only in America [insert the name of your country]
2. This virus can stay alive on playground equipment for days.
3. A virus can live outside in the flowers and trees.
4. Everybody who is infected with this virus will die.
5. You can be infected with this virus and not have any symptoms, like fever or cough.
6. This virus is called a coronavirus because it has a spikey crown all over it.
7. Scientists have known about this coronavirus for a long time.
8. Only old people get sick from this virus.
9. Everyone who is sick now has COVID-19.
10. There is nothing I can do to protect myself from this virus.

See answers on page 14.

3. How can we protect ourselves and others?





LET'S TALK ABOUT IT



This coronavirus is like a mean bully. What can we do to protect ourselves from it making us sick?

After your children have answered, you can add anything from the list below that seems relevant.

Talking points:

- This virus enters the body through the mouth, nose, and eyes. 
- When somebody who already has the virus doesn't protect their coughs or sneezes, the virus can get in the air, and if we're near them we can breathe it in. Or, if they cough or sneeze into their hands, and then touch something or somebody else, the virus can travel to the next person who touches them or the thing. 
- The best ways to protect ourselves from getting the virus or passing it along is to keep our hands clean, to not touch our face, and to keep some distance from others.
- Wear a face mask or cloth over your nose and mouth if you are outside with others.
- If you need to cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow. 
- Blow your nose into a clean tissue and throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds—about the time it takes to sing the ABC song or the Happy Birthday song two times. 
- Help your family keep things clean. Use disinfectant to clean the places you touch the most, like desks, faucet handles, light switches, TV remotes, and doorknobs.
- If you feel sick, stay home. At home, stay in one room. Be sure the bathroom is cleaned after you use it.

ACTIVITY—ELBOW BUMP TAG

It is suggested by health experts that instead of shaking hands or giving fist bumps as a greeting, we touch elbows instead. This decreases the chance that people can spread the virus.



Find a place large enough for the family to play tag. Decide who will be “IT” to start the game. IT tries to make elbow to elbow contact with the others; the first person whose elbow is touched by IT’s elbow becomes IT for the next round.

ACTIVITY—SAFETY SIGNS

Make reminder signs to put around the house to help everyone remember good habits.

Can you think of signs you can make?

Place a stack of large sticky notes (or pieces of paper) on the table. Ask each member of the family to write or draw a sign that will help people remember to wash their hands, sing the ABC song, clean doorknobs and handles, and so on. Color the signs, and place or tape them around the house in all the appropriate places.



4. What can we do while we wait for things to get better?

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT



How are our lives different now than before the coronavirus came along?

(Write answers on a large piece of paper and tape it to a place where it can be seen by all.)

Change can be hard, and many changes all at the same time can be very hard. Here are some ideas that will help you cope with the changes this coronavirus and your new way of living have brought.

A. Pay attention to your feelings

It is normal to feel sad, worried, angry, or afraid when a lot of things change, and especially when they change for the worse. This coronavirus situation has caused us to stay at home, bringing changes that have made us lose things we were used to—like the freedom to go places, being able to go to school, and hanging out with our friends. It's good to talk about what we have lost and how we feel about that.

ACTIVITY—DON'T HAVE, DO HAVE

1. Give each member of the family a small stack of sticky notes (or small pieces of paper and tape).
2. On each sticky note, write one thing you like to do, something you enjoy having, or a person you love to be with (young children can draw pictures).
3. Find a window or a place on a wall that you can stick these notes to.
4. When everybody is finished, have each person share what they wrote on their sticky notes.
5. Now look at your sticky notes and find the things you no longer have, can no longer do, and people you can no longer physically be with because of this coronavirus. Put those



sticky notes in a separate group on the window or wall. These are the things you have lost for now.

6. Give each person a chance to share the things they have lost. As you name each loss, share with your family how it makes you feel.
7. Finally, everyone should take a turn naming the things that they still have, the things they can still do, and people they love that they can still be with.

ACTIVITY—THE WORRY BOX

Ask each member of the family to say one or more things they feel worried about.

Find a box or large jar. Put a stack of small pieces of paper or notecards in the middle of the table. Ask each member of the family to write one thing that they are worried about on each piece of paper (young children can draw a picture) and place them in the box. Close the box (or put the lid on the jar) and set it aside. Assure the children that you will do something with those worries later.



ACTIVITY—SELF-PORTRAIT

Give each family member a large piece of paper. Ask them to draw a picture of themselves that shows how they are feeling during these days of staying at home. When all are finished, invite each one to share their picture. Hang the pictures on a wall, put them into an album, or take photos of them to keep as part of your family's history.



B. Do something fun

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT



What kinds of things could we do during this time that are fun?

After your children have answered, you can add anything from the list below that seems relevant.

- Go for a hike
- Have a dance party with your family
- Create a video of your family singing, dancing, or performing a skit. Send it to friends and distant family members.
- Write notes, send cards, or use online options to connect with friends and family
- Put together a care package for someone
- Play games
- Do crafts
- Make musical instruments and create your own band
- Cook together

- Learn something new
- Write a book and illustrate it
- Build something
- Find good news online and share it

Encourage each member of the family to choose one or two of these suggestions (or make up their own), put it on the calendar, and then lead it for the family.

C. Build routines

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT



What are some ways we can stay healthy during this time?

After your children have answered, you can add anything from the list below that seems relevant.

- Stay on a regular schedule as much as possible.
- Get 8 to 10 hours of sleep every night.
- Try to go to bed at the same time at night and get up at the same time in the morning.
- On school days, follow your morning routine just as if you were going to your school.
- Eat healthy meals and try to limit snacks to what you would normally eat.
- Exercise! Go for walks outside, stretch your bodies, or do a simple workout routine with the whole family.

You can also consider adding more structured activities during your day.

- Begin or build up family prayer times in the morning or evening.
- Consider a time for Bible reading and reading stories aloud, such as after lunch.
- Consider having the family memorize a Bible verse each week.
- At dinner, have everyone around the table name three things they are grateful for.
- Schedule a regular time each day to pray with another family, if possible, either at a safe distance or by phone or internet.

Use these times to acknowledge how hard it is to show kindness to each other when everyone in the family is struggling with difficult feelings. These feelings could include frustration, anger, fear, sadness, and worry.

Let this passage from the Bible become a family reminder: **“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”** (Ephesians 4:32 ESV).

D. Help the world

You may think that because you're stuck at home there's nothing you can do to help during this pandemic. That's not true.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

How can you help the world?



After your children have answered, add these two points.

1. **Stay at home.** As long as your government tells you to stay home, do so. You are helping stop the spread of the virus. When you stay at home, you are joining millions of people all over the world who are doing the same thing to help stop this virus from spreading.
2. **Pray.** People all over the world are having a difficult time with this pandemic. Many are getting sick. Doctors and nurses are working very hard. Some people are having a hard time getting food. You can pray every day for these people and others. God hears your prayers!

5. What does God say?

God made the world good. Diseases and other bad things came into the world because of sin. Jesus is God's Son. When he came to live among us, Jesus looked like an ordinary person. Even his closest friends and followers at first thought he was only a man. In this story, they begin to realize he is much more than that. Let's find out what Jesus did in a crazy situation when everyone around him was worried and afraid.

Read the story below. It is from the Gospel of Mark in the Bible. Just before this story, Jesus had been teaching huge crowds of people all day long, and he was exhausted.

And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark 4:36–41 NRSV

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Why was Jesus sleeping in the boat?
2. Why did his friends think he didn't care about them?
3. When he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!", why did they obey him?
4. Why were his friends in awe when he said that?



5. What are you most afraid of right now?

Talking points

- The Bible teaches that Jesus is both man and God. As a man he was tired, but as God he has power over the wind and the waves (Psalm 104:5–7; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).
- Jesus’s friends were in awe after the storm because they realized how powerful Jesus is. They didn’t understand yet that Jesus was God with them.
- Whenever we’re afraid, we can call on Jesus to help us.
- God is with us right now.

ACTIVITY—ACT IT OUT!

This is a fun story to act out. If you use your imagination and your bodies to act out this story, it can help you understand it in a deeper way.



Get the whole family involved, and don't forget to add sound effects! Find props for the boat and the cushion, and costumes for the friends, the wind, and so forth. Decide who will play these roles:

- Narrator
- Jesus
- Friends of Jesus
- Wind and waves (optional)

Someone could be the director, while someone else can create a video using their phone. Everyone says their own lines and the narrator reads the rest from Mark 4:36–41.

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

Ask these questions to the people who played each of the parts.



“Friends”: How did you feel ...

1. when the wind blew hard and the waves came breaking into the boat?
2. when you found Jesus asleep in the back of the boat?
3. when Jesus commanded the wind to be quiet?
4. when he asked you why you were afraid?

“Wind”: How did you feel when Jesus rebuked you?

“Waves”: How did you feel when Jesus told you to be still?

“Jesus”: How did you feel ...

1. when the disciples woke you up?
2. when you saw the problem?
3. when the waves calmed?

All: Did you realize anything new about this story when you were acting it out?

If you are stopping here for today, conclude this section with prayer or sing a song together.

6. Closing activity—Bring your worries to Jesus

- Set up a small cross in a convenient place where your family can sit around it.
- Place the Worry Box in front of the cross.
- Decide which adult or older teen will be the leader of this activity.

Ask, “Why do you think we put our Worry Box by the cross?” When everyone has had a chance to answer, read the following verse.

The Bible says,

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” (1 Peter 5:7 NLT) Now

read the following, or express these ideas in your own words:

- “This cross is a symbol of God’s love for us. He sent his Son Jesus into the world to heal us in every way: our bodies, minds, and souls. Jesus is in heaven even now, praying for us!”
- “We can bring all our worries to Jesus. He has told us not to worry, and yet he knows how hard it is for us. We will keep our Worry Box as long as we need to. You can add your worries to it anytime you want. And we can keep giving them to God, even if it’s many times a day. He is always ready to hear us.”
- “Just as Jesus was in the boat with his friends during a crazy time, Jesus is and will be here with us during this coronavirus time. These are his words in our situation, too: Peace! Be still!”
- “What other things might God be saying to us?” Let family members answer. Then read one or more of these passages:
 - Psalm 46:10 (NRSV): “Be still, and know that I am God.”
 - Mark 6:50 (NLT): “Don’t be afraid.... Take courage! I am here!”
 - John 14:27 (NRSV): “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.... Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”
 - Hebrews 13:5b (NRSV): “I will never leave you or forsake you.”
- “Let’s ask Jesus to help us let go of our worries as we give them to him.” Pray a simple prayer with your family as you give your worries to God and ask for his comforting presence with you during this difficult time. (For example, “Jesus, we give you all our worries. Please give us your peace. Amen.”)
- “Let’s look at each other and say these words together. Ready?
‘Jesus said to the waves, PEACE, BE STILL.’”

TRUE OR FALSE GAME ANSWERS

1. False 6. True
2. True 7. False
3. False 8. False 4. False 9. False
5. True 10. False

OTHER BIBLE PASSAGES TO CONSIDER READING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

- 1 Kings 17:1, 8–24. Elijah and the widow of Zarephath
- 2 Kings 5:1–15. Naaman and the little girl
- Matthew 18:1–4, 10–14. The little ones and the lost sheep
- Mark 6:45–52. Jesus walks on water and calms another wind
- Mark 10:13–16. Jesus blessing the children
- Luke 12:22–28. Jesus teaching on worry