

parenting CHRISTIAN kids

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Give All Your Worries to God

POWERSOURCE

ASK JESUS:

1. To replace worries with peace—for you and your children.
2. To assure you that God is in control of your life, your family, and the world.
3. To help you manage your own anxiety and practice self-care.

Summer is typically a time to “de-stress” and enjoy less-hectic schedules, fun outings, and time with extended family. The summer of 2020—along with so much else—has been upended by the pandemic, however. Social distancing, shutdowns, layoffs, and uncertainty about the upcoming school year are combining to cast a shadow over what are typically considered “bright” months.

In a study from April, more than one in four U.S. adults met criteria for diagnosing serious mental distress—a 700% increase from 2018. Children are affected, too. In another study, also from April, 89% of parents said the pandemic has added overall stress and anxiety to their kids’ lives.

While the sources of stress vary from family to family, the results often include sleep and behavioral changes, such as moodiness. Younger children may become clingy and lose impulse control, while older kids may appear unmotivated, combative, or withdrawn.

Now more than ever, parents need to be proactive about recognizing signs of distress and helping children de-stress. Experts recommend showing kids how to identify their emotions, encouraging honesty about tough feelings, limiting media and news exposure, modeling positive coping skills, conducting age-appropriate devotions about God’s protection and sovereignty, and seeking professional help when needed. Use the ideas on the next page to help kids find calm—and find Jesus—during turbulent times.

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Transform Fear into Resilience

Disappointments, worries, and tough times can have “up sides,” experts say. These include opportunities to practice coping skills, build resilience, and put faith into action. Children who feel stressed can discover the support systems available to them and also learn how to assist others. Families who face struggles can rely on God, seek outside help, and eventually be bolstered by their endurance. Through their loving actions, parents can be an extension of Jesus, displaying patience, grace, and unconditional love to kids—no matter what’s happening in their world.



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Staying Afloat

Fill a wading pool halfway and gather objects of various weights (a stick, a block, a stone, a ping-pong ball, plastic toys, etc.). Have family members take off their shoes and step in the water.

Ask: **Who thinks they can walk on top of this water?** (Try it.) Read aloud Matthew 14:22-33. Say: **Jesus can do anything; that’s why he could walk on water. When Peter trusted Jesus, he could walk on water too, but when Peter looked at the stormy waves he got scared and sank. Let’s see what else floats and sinks.**

Experiment with the objects to see what sinks and what floats—and for how long. Afterward, ask: **What do you remember about Jesus in our Bible story?** (Pass around a floatable object as each person shares.) **When have you been scared like Peter?** (Pass around a sinkable object as each person shares.) Say: **We can trust Jesus to take care of us when we’re scared. Jesus loves us and guides us through storms. Thanks, Jesus!**

Worry Whirl Have two family members pair up and link arms back to back. Blindfold one. Say: “Think about your worries while you race across the room (or lawn) and back—while spinning in circles. The ‘seeing’ partner must keep the other person safe. Ready? Whirl!” After everyone has a turn, discuss how the game is like real life. Read Jeremiah 29:11. Say: “When we feel like we’re spinning around with worries, God wants us to trust him. God has good plans for us!”

Praises & Petitions Have regular chats about day-to-day ups and downs. Set aside time before bed to share praises and thanks as well as needs and worries. Pray about them and keep a prayer journal to see how God responds.

Squirts of Courage Draw a large candle on paper. Read Matthew 5:16. Say: “Sometimes it’s easy to shine God’s light; other times it’s tough. Let’s play a game that shows how to keep shining!” Give two people (Squirters) filled water guns. Have them stand 8 feet apart facing each other. Put everyone else (Savers) in the middle and give one the candle. Say: “Squirters try to put out the candle. Savers try to protect it. When the candle gets squirted three times, we’ll switch.” Discuss how to help people “shine,” even on bad days.

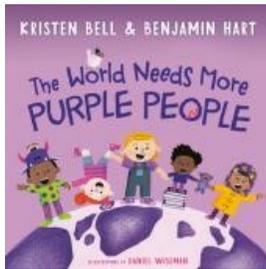
Faith Over Fear Set out paper, markers, craft sticks, glue, and tape. Say: “Let’s create a ‘monster’ and pretend it’s our fears. Choose something you’re afraid of and color your monster to look that way.” Share your creations. Read Psalm 27:1. Have each person write that reference on a paper slip and tape it around their monster. Say: “Whenever you’re afraid, remember that God is always with you and protects you. Wrapped in God’s Word, let’s fight our fears!”

Don’t Snap! Set out scissors and rubber bands. In five minutes, make the longest, stretchiest band possible. Talk about pressures that “stretch” us thin. Read Philippians 4:6-7 and then pray, thanking God for peace and protection.

Shelter in Jesus Together, wad up scrap paper and brainstorm things people fear or worry about. Say: “The Bible says we have nothing to fear.” Read Psalm 91:1-2. Choose someone to be It. Have half the people use their bodies to make a shelter to protect It while others throw paper wads at It. Switch roles. Then ask: “How did It feel in the shelter? Was protecting It easy or tough? How did your shelter compare to God’s?” Say: “You are precious to God, who always protects you!”

Say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, and do not fear; for your God is...coming to save you.”
—Isaiah 35:4

MEDIA MADNESS



BOOK

Title: *The World Needs More Purple People*

Genre: Picture book

Rating: age 4+

Authors: Kristen Bell, Benjamin Hart

Synopsis: This book is written for younger children and is focused on inclusiveness, working together, and the beauty of diversity. The book's narrator, Penny Purple, explains to readers that when red and blue people use their best qualities and strengths, the result is purple people—something the world needs a lot more of.

Our Take: Featuring cute cartoon “people,” an upbeat tone, and a focus on positive character qualities, children will be drawn to the can-do message of this book. Though written for younger readers, it has a great message for all readers.



TV

Title: *The Big Fib*

Network: Disney+

Synopsis: On this new game show, based on the podcast “Pants on Fire,” kid contestants interact with two adult panelists and try to determine who's telling the truth. Host Yvette Nicole Brown and her sidekick robot inject humor into the episodes, and panelists provide insights into kid-friendly topics such as superheroes and insects.

Our Take: In addition to providing entertainment for both children and parents, this show can jump-start important conversations about honesty. Talk with kids about God's command to not bear false witness, and research what happens to various people in the Bible who lie. With older kids, discuss the nuances of white lies.



CULTURE & TRENDS

A Summer Like No Other With many vacations canceled, families are making new summer plans and purchases. Sales of backyard pools and recreational vehicles have been on the rise since the pandemic began. (*various sources*)

Seeking Comfort People of all ages have been turning to carbs. For adults, bread sales (and baking) have spiked, while young eaters are gobbling up pre-packaged snacks. Sales of Goldfish crackers jumped 23% this spring. (*forbes.com*)

Lots o' Llamas Toy-trend watchers say lovable llamas have replaced unicorns as the new “it” animal. Slinky and Lego are among the brands that have added the cute but awkward-looking creatures to their collections. (*nytimes.com*)

QUICK STATS

Read Up! Two summers ago, 20% of kids ages 6 to 17 read zero books. That was up five percentage points from summer 2016. (*Scholastic*)

Summer Slump Compared to the school year, children watch 20 more minutes of TV and consume three more ounces of sugary drinks per day in the summer. (*Journal of School Health*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Paper Mario: The Origami King

In this RPG adventure for Nintendo Switch, Mario and Olivia fight ring-based battles against Folded Soldiers to rescue Princess Peach from King Olly (Olivia's brother). With a 1,000-Fold Arms ability, Mario can become super-stretchy. Rated E for Everyone.

Mystery Recipe

Three times a week, this new podcast offers silly yet educational themed episodes about food and cooking. Each 20-minute show ends with a “cook-along,” and recipes are available online. The free podcast is produced by America's Test Kitchen Kids, which also offers a fee-based Chefs' Club, cookbooks, and more.

Camp EDMO

Summer camps have gone virtual, and this site offers honor-system, sliding-scale tuition so more families can take part. Camp topics include STEM subjects, arts, and games. Online options include both scheduled and drop-in sessions, plus one-on-one coaching (for a higher price).

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