

## The Pandemic Generation

Do you remember where you were when President Kennedy was assassinated? Did you watch the Challenger explode on its way to space? What were you doing when you learned about the 9/11 attacks? These were pivotal events that defined generations. Do you see the world differently after living through these events?

COVID-19 and this time of physical distancing is a pivotal event for our kids. They will always remember the year that they didn't go back to school. Their experiences now will color the way that they see the world for their whole lives.

As we talk to our kids, we help them make meaning out of what they see and experience. Stay calm and reassuring. Take time to answer their questions. We can influence how this pandemic shapes a generation. Perhaps our children will emerge from this time as:

### Critical thinkers

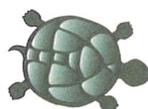
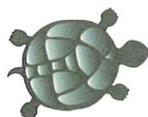
- Talk to your kids about how some stories on COVID-19 on the internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Introduce them to Snopes.com and other fact-checking resources. Help them identify credible sources of information. Can they tell when a post is presenting fact and when it is presenting an opinion? What might be a clue that something presented as fact may not be true?
- Talk to your kids about the news. Pay attention to what they are thinking about and how they are responding emotionally. We all hit our limits. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety. Help your child recognize when it's time to take a break from the news or social media.

### Continuous learners

- This is a brand new virus, and the world is learning more about it every day. Our kids are watching the world learn. They see that science is always developing, and we are always learning.

### Innovators

- These are the children who have been extremely bored. They've done puzzles; they've played music, they've read books. They're learning how to cook. They're sort of gardening. They are playing board games even though some of the pieces are missing. They have literally watched everything on Disney+. They've made beautiful Mother's



Day gifts with a glue gun and some trash from the recycling bin. Just wait till they focus this creative ingenuity on solving the world's problems.

### **Compassionate community members**

- These kids are learning that we are all connected. Help them understand that we stay home when we are sick because taking care of ourselves helps to take care of the other people. Toughing it out puts others at risk. When we buy too much toilet paper, other people don't have what they need. My mask protects you; your mask protects me.
- Our kids are painfully learning that we feel better when our social connections are strong. They will remember this time of missing their friends. Missing school. Missing playing with others. Enjoy virtual socializing. Connect with friends and family members using phone calls and FaceTime or similar apps. This can help to avoid feeling isolated and can build and maintain relationships.
- Teach the kids to have compassion for people who are sick. Health care is important. Teach them to have compassion for people who cannot get the care that they need, because we have so many sick people that we don't have the health care resources to care for them all. For our state to be healthy, all of our communities need to be healthy.

Raising the pandemic generation is not easy. If you notice persistent problems with sleep, changes in eating habits or difficulty concentrating on typical tasks, or if your kids have a persistent sense of hopelessness, excessive sadness or overwhelming worry, contact the **Nisqually Clinic at 360-459-5312**.

**Practice compassion.** Reach out to a family with children. How are they coping? Young and old, we all have good days and bad days. And some of us have coping skills that are still developing.