



# The TOOLBOX

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS



## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC FOR PARENTS OF 6-12-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

**TOOL:** Prevention

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Parents of 6-12-year-old children

**TOOL INTENDED FOR:** Parents

### DESIGN

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**TOOL:** Prevention

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**TOOL INTENDED FOR:** Parents

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– Details: E.g. Parents of 6-12-year-old children.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

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– Parents of 6-12-year-old children.

**NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS**

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- Parent-child relationships
- Bond with adults
- Behaviours: frequent crying, opposition, seeking adult attention

**SPECIFIC GOALS**

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- To understand the importance of parent-child relationships.
- To understand the potential impact of the pandemic on parent-child relationships.
- To develop basic strategies for developing and maintaining positive parent-child relationships.

**DESIGN**

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## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC – FOR PARENTS OF 6-12-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

The new pandemic reality in which your family lives may influence the quality of your relationship with your child. In some cases, the situation has enabled families to spend more time together and experience activities that are usually difficult to do. However, the pandemic period may be conducive to the appearance of stressors in everyone's life, such as the fear of being sick or transmitting the disease, routine changes, decreased network support, tele-work/family balance, financial concerns or other stressors more specific to your situation. So it's completely normal to be more concerned and sometimes less available for your child.

In this context, the quality of parent-child relationships plays an essential role. In quality relationships, parents are **responsive** to their children's cues and try to interpret the meaning of and adjust to their children's behaviour. To promote their children's well-being, parents can try to respond to their demands in a predictable manner. The more children know what to expect, the greater their sense of security; this will allow them to focus on various learning.

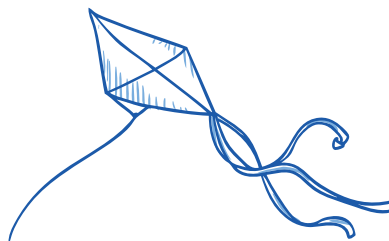
To maintain quality relationships, parents may also try to adjust to the emotions experienced and expressed by their children, even if they are more frequent or intense and sometimes seem trivial to adults.

The warmth of parent-child contact is ultimately just as important. Children may seek positive physical contact more often than usual in the uncertain context of the pandemic. Parents should therefore welcome and kindly respond to their children's requests for reassurance.

Responding sensitively to children's needs may make them more independent in their play and school activities.

Rather than trying to stop the behaviour of children who are crying more easily than usual, parents can recognize that the situation is stressful and give them a warm hug and reassuring presence. At this age, children are able to express more of their concerns when they feel they have their parents' support (5).

If children know that every night after dinner, it's time for their bath and relaxation before going to bed, they will get used to this comforting routine and will be more easily guided by the adult.





**When setting up a routine, parents may also include quality time with their child(ren). During confinement, depending on the children's age, a variety of activities can be integrated into the routine:**

- Doing crafts
- Playing board games
- Playing ball
- Cycling
- Reading stories
- Looking at family photos
- Playing in the park
- Listening to a movie
- Building tents with sheets and cushions
- Cooking
- Etc.



If children ask questions about the virus, it's important that parents take the time to respond. They can do so by choosing age-appropriate words and information. It's important for children to process the information without being overwhelmed with anxiety. You shouldn't avoid their questions, but information should be filtered and you should remain vigilant regarding media exposure.

**As an adult, remember to take care of yourself, so that you can take better care of your child.**

- Give yourself time to relax.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help if necessary (5).
- Some resources are suggested at the end of this document.

**If you, your spouse or your child are feeling a high level of stress, go to the anxiety capsule to find various tips and advice.**



To maintain quality relationships with your children at all times (and even more so during the pandemic), the following are some key behaviours:

- **Help children manage their emotions and put them into words.** For example, if a child is screaming when his brother takes a toy that belongs to him, you can say, “You don't like it when your brother takes your games without asking. You're angry.” This strategy will allow your child to feel understood and safe with the adult. In addition, it will allow them to learn to recognize the emotion experienced and, eventually, be able to name it themselves. You also need to be available for children in order to help them better cope with this emotion (4).
- **Make frequent, positive eye contact with your children (winks, smiles of approval).**
- **It may be beneficial to use positive language in order to give children instructions and set clear expectations (6).** For example, rather than saying, “Don't yell, I'm on the phone,” you can specifically identify the expected behaviour: “Please speak softly when I'm on the phone.” Afterwards, it's important to praise the children's efforts and recognize good behaviour. For example, the parent might say, “Thank you for speaking softly when I was on the phone.”
- **Try to understand the meaning of the children's behaviour by analyzing the underlying emotion;** this will help you identify the needs expressed by children through their behaviours. By better understanding the actual needs, adults can then appropriately intervene (4). For example, your 9-year-old refuses to pick up his dishes after the meal as required by the house rules. Rather than asking him five times to pick up his dishes and possibly lose your patience, it may be helpful to recognize that he really wants to go outside and play with his friend who is waiting for him, saying: “I know you're dying to go play with Maxim and I want you to go. So as soon as you pick up your dishes, you can go out.”





## USEFUL RESOURCES

If necessary, to facilitate children's understanding of the situation and to better answer their questions, a useful tool is the book *Petit Covid devenu gigantesque*, written by Nathalie Parent, Psychologist, and Fabrice Boulanger, Author and Illustrator (5), which can be downloaded on the following website:

<https://www.fabriceboulanger.com/petit-covid>

LigneParents: 1 800-361-5085

Info-Social: 811

Maison de la famille in your area: [Dial 211 to find the resource near you](#)

Entraide Parent – Support line: [418-684-0050](tel:418-684-0050)

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