



# Spiritual Resilience in Uncertain Times

Photo by Kyle Nieber

By Kari Sutton

**W**ith everything that's going on in our world it's very easy to feel incredibly overwhelmed by all of the information that we're hearing about COVID-19. The levels of anxiety in the community are rapidly rising and it is understandable if your children are feeling anxious too. The following suggestions provide you with practical strategies to build spiritual resilience during this global time of uncertainty.

## DON'T AVOID THE TOPIC

Most children have already heard about the virus either from the news media, at school or listening to the conversations of adults close to them. If we avoid talking about the COVID-19 with them it can increase their worry and anxiety as they want to know what's going on and may catastrophise things in their minds if we don't openly discuss it with them. Transparency is crucial for kids as they can tell when there is a proverbial elephant in the room that no-one is talking about. The conversations you have can be opportunities to set the emotional tone for your children. Listen deeply as they share their anxieties and concerns and validate their feelings.

## BE CALM AND REASSURING

Before talking to your children about COVID-19 you need to firstly ensure you're aware of your own levels of anxiety or fear and manage these before you speak to your kids. As President Veazey recommends become still and ask yourself "how am I doing right now?" then listen closely to your body, mind and soul. Tune in to what you need to do to feel safe, grounded and connected to God's love and grace. We need to ensure we are calm, centred and grounded so we can be there for our children to lead them through this time of uncertainty. When we are calm and reassuring children are more likely to be calm.

## LIMIT NEWS EXPOSURE

Turn off the constant bombardment from all forms of the media as it's simply going to make children more worried and anxious. The continuous onslaught of the 24-hour news cycle can become overwhelming so take a break for your own wellbeing and spend the time practising Holy Attention. Look around your house or apartment, your yard, or wherever you find yourself. Notice what is beautiful, messy, comfortable, holy, in your sacred ordinary life. Notice what you are grateful for. Notice what you haven't noticed before. Take a long, loving look at where God is present in your life and encourage your children to do the same.

## GIVE THEM A SENSE OF CONTROL AND POWER

Children feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe so remind them that they can keep themselves safe by washing their hands, social distancing and not touching their face, mouth or eyes. You can also help them practice slow deep breathing which calms the amygdala and reduces anxiety. Start simply by noticing their breath and then you can help them do triangle breathing – breath in for a count of 4 (one side of the triangle), hold for a count of 4 (another side of the triangle) breath out for a count of 4 (the last side of the triangle). Adults can choose a phrase for each inhale and exhale as a form of prayer (refer to the Spiritual Check In document on the church's website). These strategies empower them to take action and not feel so helpless.

## LOOK FOR THE HELPERS

When there is such a negative and fearful tone to the information and images that are circulating it's important for children to know that people are helping each other through acts of kindness and generosity. One of our Enduring Principles is Grace and Generosity and we can be living examples of this during this difficult time, by thinking about what we can do to help others who are less fortunate – it could be as simple as making a phone call, writing a card, waving through a window or donating to those in need. Reaching out in small ways can help us remember that we belong to each other even when we can't be physically together.

## MODEL SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE

COVID-19, a life circumstance beyond our control, is interfering with our daily lives and causing anxiety, fear, intolerance, resignation, even despair but spiritual resilience can live on. We can all implement positive, life affirming strategies that change our daily routines into adventures. We can anticipate moments of joy and delight, that's how God intended the world to be. We are surrounded by God's divine grace and love during this global crisis, let's make the time to practice our spiritual disciplines so we can intentionally build our spiritual resilience. As parents we are leaders for our children, what we model and the tone we set is what they will absorb and internalise, shaping the rest of their lives and helping them develop a rich relationship with God.

“As President Veazey recommends become still and ask yourself “how am I doing right now?” then listen closely to your body, mind and soul. Tune in to what you need to do to feel safe, grounded and connected to God's love and grace.”

Kari Sutton is a researcher, educator, author and speaker who has helped over 25,000 parents, educators and other people who care for kids plant the seeds of resilience and emotional wellbeing for future generations.