

The week's best parenting advice: *April 21, 2020*

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Our parenting newsletter is a weekly roundup of the best parenting insights from scientists and family experts.

1. The good news

As researchers learn more about COVID-19, "it seems increasingly clear that kids are not heavily affected," says Emily Oster in the *Parentdata* newsletter. Health experts have for months suspected that

the disease is rare among children and the symptoms mild, but recent data puts some statistical weight behind the theory. The CDC is tracking hospitalization rates by age and found that "hospitalization rates last week in children 0 to 4 were 1.1 per 100,000 or about 300 total in the U.S. For kids aged 5 to 17 it was 0.3 per 100,000 or about 160 children," Oster says. She adds that, over two and a half months since February 1, three children under the age of 15 died in America due to the virus. "COVID is simply a very small share, and a very small overall risk," she says. [*Parentdata, CDC*]

2. Happy (quarantine) birthday!

Most parents of children over the age of 2 can tell you that a kid's birthday is a Very Big Deal. But most of America is in quarantine thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, and birthdays are decidedly less fun when you can't celebrate with all your favorite people. "While gatherings of any size are a no-go these days, there are still plenty of ways to make your little one's day special," writes Katie Hintz-Zambrano at *Mother Mag*. Let your kid dress up in their favorite fancy clothes, consider letting them play hooky from homeschool, and plan a special birthday menu for them. For older kids who might be missing out on partying with friends, maybe create a video montage of pre-recorded well-wishes. And if that doesn't do the trick,

Hintz-Zambrano suggests you organize a "drive-by birthday party" where friends "drive by your home, honk, display handmade signs and balloons, maybe give a gift, etc." [*Mother Mag*]

3. What no one tells you about weaning

In a recent interview on Jameela Jamil's *I Weigh* podcast, actress Reese Witherspoon offered up some real talk on her struggles with postpartum depression. Specifically, the mother of three talked about the turbulent hormonal shift that can accompany the end of the breastfeeding journey. "Nobody explained to me that when you wean a baby, your hormones go into the toilet," she says. "I felt more depressed than I'd ever felt in my whole life. It was scary." Indeed, post-weaning depression is a thing, but it "doesn't get its fair share of attention," writes Zara Husaini Hanawalt at *Parents.com*. Sometimes it can happen months after weaning has begun, blindsiding mothers. It's okay to seek help, especially if the symptoms interfere with your ability to function, or lead to suicidal thoughts. "I have deep compassion for women who are going through that," Witherspoon says. "Postpartum is very real." [*Earwolf, Parents.com*]

4. The money talk

When is a good time to teach your kids about money? Start 'em young, says Claire Gillespie at *The Week*. "It's a good idea to start the money conversation by the time kids are 7," she says. "Research suggests many of our behaviors that influence how we manage money — things like our ability to plan ahead and delay our own gratification — are largely set by that age. And habits get harder to change as we get older." Start by explaining the decision-making process behind your own purchases, like groceries or clothes. Talking openly about money in your household "and using money as an interactive learning tool helps diminish the taboos that still exist about money," says Erika Rasure, Ph.D., assistant professor in the online MBA in financial services program at Maryville University. "If not addressed appropriately and at the right times, money has the potential to be a confusing or shameful topic." [*The Week*]

5. Missing out on milestones

The coronavirus pandemic has robbed many teenagers of "critical transitions into adulthood," Dr. Ludmila De faria, a psychiatrist with Florida State University, tells KQED. Things like graduation, prom, and even college plans have all been put on pause for the time being, and it makes sense that teens are "mourning the loss of important developmental milestones

they were supposed to be doing at this time in their lives," De faria says. Parents should take these losses seriously. Acknowledge your teenager's fears about their future, and encourage them to look ahead to all the good things waiting for them when the crisis ends. One Florida high schooler says she finds comfort in focusing on the greater good. "As disappointed as we all are that we're missing out on these important milestones in our life we do understand that this virus is killing people, and that if we don't sacrifice these things that we might contribute to the problem," she told KQED. [*KQED*]