



Mount Sinai Parenting Center



Re-Entry Anxiety: Managing FOGO (Fear of going out) After Lockdown

It goes without saying that these months of pandemic parenting have been stressful and hard. But they've also created a sense of safety. So, it's understandable that the prospects of re-entry into a new normal is making a lot of parents and kids quite nervous.

Given all the unknowns, the transition won't be seamless. But here's some suggestions to help manage the uncertainty of uncharted waters.

- **Make peace with anxiety-** Post-lockdown anxiety is real. The storm might be subsiding, but the danger remains. But your child's experience of re-entry begins with you. Find a way to regulate yourself, so that you can be a calming influence on your child.
- **Deal with one worry at a time-** Encourage everyone to write each worry down. Categorize things you can and can't control and focus on the former.
- **Know the statistics-** Develop an approach to re-entry that is proportionate to how threatening the virus is to you and your family in your area.
- **Talk positives that await-** What are the things you'll gain, be excited about, look forward to, from re-entry?
- **Recall positives you'll take-** Family movie nights, connections with neighbors, more efficient virtual work meetings. Talk with your family about the positive lessons and new routines you'll take with you from lockdown.
- **Use language that empowers everyone-** Rather than saying things like, "Nothing will be the same," or "It'll be weird to have to wear masks," use empowering language. Like, "It'll be interesting to see how things are different." Explain to your child that "We know a lot more about the virus now and how to stay safe, like by wearing masks."
- **Accept all feelings-** Make sure your child knows that it's normal for everyone to feel a lot of big feelings. Don't minimize your child's feelings, "Don't be scared," in an attempt to make her feel better. Instead, acknowledge whatever she's feeling and talk about how she can cope with the feeling.

- **Acknowledge the change**- Discuss how things might be different and how the changes might be disorienting, frustrating or upsetting.
- **Keep everybody's resources full**- Make sure everyone in your family (including you) is getting good rest, regular exercise and nutritious meals.
- **Address the uncertainty**- Chances are you told your kids the same message told to you, that we were in lockdown to flatten the curve and keep vulnerable people safe. Does this mean they are safe now? Be prepared to answer your children's questions about why we can resume life now.
- **Be patient with separation**- Don't push yourself or your child out of your comfort zones too quickly. If you're constantly in a state of fight or flight, you'll feel burned out, anxious and have difficulty sleeping.
- **Remember, we are resilient**- Most people are resilient and will weather this stressful experience and bounce back emotionally.
- **Plan some family fun**- Young children (and pets) have loved having their parents' home, so make sure your child knows that re-entry doesn't mean family togetherness has to end. People feel better when they have something to look forward to, so schedule some family fun on the calendar for everyone to see.