



# Supporting Stress, Excessive Worry and Mental Health During COVID-19



March 18, 2020

Melissa Callen, MA, LPC, ASC  
Regional Director

Duncan Young, CEO



Effective School Solutions





# Effective School Solutions

*Reinventing K-12 Mental Health Care*

ESS partners with school districts to help them implement mental health and behavioral support programs that help improve care, strengthen outcomes, and maintain students in their home district

# Housekeeping

You will receive via email the recording and the PowerPoint

Materials presented today use information from:

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Centers for Disease Control
- Child Mind Institute
- Unicef
- Effective School Solution Practices

Take care of yourself

# Topics We're Going to Cover

1. Fears, Excessive Worry and Anxiety
2. Eight Tips on Managing COVID-19 Related Stress
3. Helping Children Cope
4. Supporting Children with Existing Mental Health Challenges
5. Resources You Can Turn To

**Fears, Excessive Worry and Anxiety**

# Fears, Excessive Worry and Anxiety

| Age Group                          | Reactions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Preschool</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased fear of being alone</li><li>• Increased bad dreams</li><li>• Increase in or changes to of loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting</li><li>• Changes in appetite</li><li>• Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors</li></ul>                                                                                   |
| <b>School Age<br/>(ages 6-12)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Irritability, whining, aggressive behaviors</li><li>• Clinging, nightmares</li><li>• Sleep/appetite disturbances</li><li>• Physical symptoms (headaches/stomach aches)</li><li>• Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest</li><li>• Competition for parent's attention</li><li>• Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school</li></ul> |
| <b>Adolescent<br/>(ages 13-18)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical symptoms (headaches/stomach aches/rashes)</li><li>• Sleep/appetite disturbances</li><li>• Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy</li><li>• Ignoring health promotion behaviors</li><li>• Isolating from peers and loved ones</li><li>• Concerns about stigma and injustices</li><li>• Avoiding/cutting virtual school</li></ul>                  |

# **Eight Tips on Managing COVID-19 Related Stress**

# Tip #1

## Remain Calm



- Remain calm and deal with your own worry and anxiety
- Use coping skills to calm yourself
- Children will follow both verbal and non-verbal reactions
- Watch your response to the news...and your own media consumption
- Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective



# Tip #2

## Lay a Foundation



- Keep talking, let them know that the lines of communication will be open
- Find other topics to talk about. It's a great time for teachable moments
- Invite children to talk about the issue- find out what they already know or what they are learning
- Remember that not talking about something can increase worry
- Don't minimize or avoid concerns- listen and let them know that it's OK to be scared or worried
- It is okay to say "even though we don't have answers to everything right now, know that once we know more, we will let you know"

# Tip #3

## Be Honest & Accurate



- Keep updated about what is happening from credible sources
- Don't be afraid to discuss the COVID-19 and how it is spread
- Let children know about the symptoms of COVID 19- fever, cough, shortness of breath
- Let children know your thoughts

# Tip #4

## Be Reassuring



- If true, emphasize to children that they and their family is fine
- Remind children that adults are there to keep them safe and healthy
- Reassure children that the coronavirus is still relatively rare and that most people who have the virus have only mild to moderate symptoms
- Remind them that children seem to have much milder symptoms



# Tip #5

## Create a Plan for Safety



***“Kids feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe.”***

*–Jamie Howard, Child Mind Institute*

- Focus on what you're doing to stay safe and emphasize precautions you are taking
- Review and model basic hygiene, e.g. basic handwashing

## Tip #6

# Avoid Blame & Lookout For Stigma



- Avoid stereotyping and identifying someone to “blame” for the virus
- Explain that Covid-19 has nothing to do with how someone looks or what language they speak
- Be aware of any bullying or negative comments
- Encourage your children to spread kindness and support- we’re all in this together

# Tip #7

## Stick to Routines



- Structure each day- even if your district is doing virtual learning
- Balance schoolwork and play/relaxation time
- Don't push children if they seem overwhelmed
- Discuss the new rules at home
- Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes
- Manage screen times



## Tip #8

# Be Developmentally Appropriate



- Make time to talk, be available when your children want to talk
- Let your children's questions be your guide to how much information to provide
- Early elementary school children need brief, simple information
- Upper elementary and early middle school children will be more vocal in asking questions
- Upper middle school and high school students can discuss the issue more in depth

# Helping Children Cope

# Helping Children Cope

| Age Group                 | How to Help                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Preschool                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience and tolerance</li> <li>• Provide reassurance (verbal and physical)</li> <li>• Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling</li> <li>• Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements</li> <li>• Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime</li> <li>• Maintain regular family routines</li> <li>• Avoid media exposure</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| School Age<br>(ages 6-12) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience, tolerance, and reassurance</li> <li>• Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and internet</li> <li>• Regular exercise and stretching</li> <li>• Engage in educational activities (workbook, educational games)</li> <li>• Participate in structured household chores</li> <li>• Set gentle but firm limits</li> <li>• Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions</li> <li>• Encourage expression through play and conversation</li> <li>• Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines</li> <li>• Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard</li> </ul> |



# Helping Children Cope

| Age Group                           | How to Help                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Adolescents<br/>(ages 13-18)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Patience, tolerance and reassurance</li><li>• Encourage continuation of routines</li><li>• Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force)</li><li>• Stay in touch with friends through telephone, internet, video games</li><li>• Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors</li><li>• Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school</li><li>• Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring</li></ul> |

# Supporting Children with Existing Mental Health Challenges

# Supporting Children with Existing Mental Health Challenges



- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Make time to unwind
- Remind children to separate what is in their control from what is not
- Help them to create plans to do what helps them feel a sense of safety
- Challenge yourself to stay in the present
- Connect with others. Have them talk to people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Connect with existing resources for consistent plans to connect



# Supporting Children with Existing Mental Health Challenges



*Practice asking the following questions:*

- Are you okay?
- How can I help?

*If you are concerned about safety:*

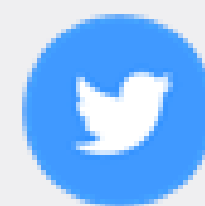
- Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- Are you thinking about suicide?

# Resources You Can Turn To

# Resources



- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990
- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline texting TalkWithUS to 66746
- The Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK
- Autism Response Team 9am to 5pm in all time zones at 1-800-AUTISM2 In Spanish at 1-888-772-9050
- Make a list of local resources
- Effective School Solutions



# Ongoing PD and Mental Health Moments



- We will be introducing a calendar of ongoing professional development webinars for teachers and parents in the coming days- you can find this on the ESS website
- Also, beginning late this week, we will introduce Mental Health Moments- mental health tips and strategies distributed 3x per week
- Meant for educators and parents
- You can find them on ESS social media platforms

Facebook: [facebook.com/effectiveschoolsolutions](https://facebook.com/effectiveschoolsolutions)

Twitter: @EffSchSol

Linked In: [linkedin.com/company/effectiveschoolsolutions](https://linkedin.com/company/effectiveschoolsolutions)





“Hope is important  
because it can  
make the present  
moment less  
difficult to bear. If  
we believe that  
tomorrow will be  
better, we can bear  
a hardship today.”

---

THICH NHAT HANH