



Epping School District Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter Managing Stress and Anxiety during COVID-19

March 17, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

These are unprecedented and uncertain times. Every day we are hearing information about COVID-19 and our children are hearing it too. Many of us can feel overwhelmed by this information and it can create a number of different emotions. We need to be caring, supportive and patient with each other. In addition, we need to heighten our awareness of others' emotions and responses to all this uncertainty. Any one of us, regardless of a previous history of mental health concerns, may experience anxiety during this time. It is important to remember that our children's response to stress will be influenced by our own response. Be mindful of how you talk about your own concerns around this topic and try to reassure your child. While this is a difficult time, we will get through it and children need this sense of hope and optimism. The following information from the Center for Disease Control may be helpful in thinking about how to manage your own stress, how to recognize feelings of anxiety in your child and how to support children during this time. If you have concerns about your child, please reach out to the school counselor or school psychologist in your building.

Sincerely,
Sarah Wagner
Epping School Psychologist and District Counseling Coordinator

The following content was adapted from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Manage Anxiety & Stress

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.



Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include"

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
- Children and teens

- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Things you can do to support yourself

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Reduce stress in yourself and others

[Sharing the facts](#) about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful.

When you share accurate information about COVID-19 you can help make people feel less stressed and allow you to connect with them.

Learn more about [taking care of your emotional health](#).

For parents

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

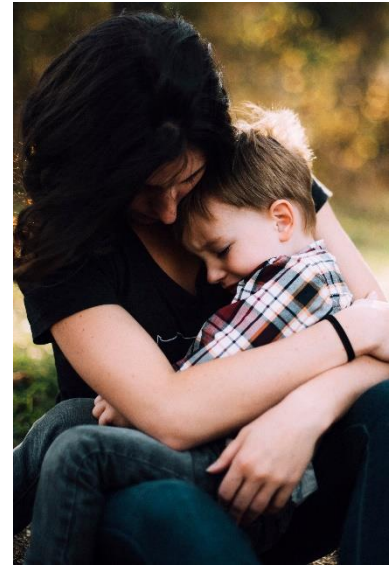
Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness

- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school/schoolwork
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many things you can do to support your child

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Encourage your child to stay connected with peers and family as much as possible. They can video chat, Face Time, text, etc. Social connection during this time of isolation is essential!
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.



The following resources may help with communicating and supporting students around COVID-19 concerns, questions or comments:

Child Mind: Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus:
<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

5 Tips for Helping Teens Manage Anxiety about the Coronavirus:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytimeswell>

NASP: Talking to Children about COVID-19:
[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)