



## Epping School District Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter Helping Your Child Cope with Anxiety

April 14, 2020

Dear Epping School Community,

As we begin our 5<sup>th</sup> week of remote learning and social distancing, many of you may have children or teens who are struggling with anxiety stemming from fears about the virus or from being cooped up in the house for so long. It is a time of uncertainty and stress for many of us, and our children are likely experiencing heightened feelings of worry as well. Children and teens are likely to have a particularly difficult time understanding what is going on right now as their brains are not fully developed yet. Those who have previously struggled with anxiety or have a tendency to worry are likely to struggle even more. Below you will find some strategies that you can use to help your child better cope with any anxious feelings they are currently experiencing. Some of these strategies may also help you if you are experiencing anxiety. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to any one of us if you need additional support.

Sincerely,  
The Epping School District Counseling Department

### HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH ANXIETY

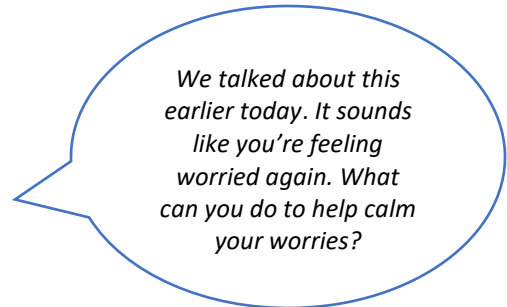
- **Name it.** It is important that children have an opportunity to talk about what is worrying them and to be able to label it as anxiety. Ask them specific questions about what is on their mind.
- **Validate it.** Let them know that it is okay for them to feel this way. Be careful not to dismiss, invalidate, make fun of or reject their feelings.
- **Sit with it.** You may be tempted to reassure your child when they voice their worries or try to distract them. However, they need to learn to sit with the discomfort and be okay with it. Often, the more we try to fight our feelings, the worse they get. For children, a chance to talk about their worries and have you simply listen and sit with them is often enough.
- **Talk about the facts.** Do not shy away from helping your child understand the facts at an age-appropriate level. Be sure you are well-informed and using reliable resources such as the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>. For younger children, keep explanations simple, short and concrete. Try using role play. For older children you can direct them to reliable sources to explore the facts themselves.

*What are you most worried about or scared of?*

*I understand that you are feeling scared of this virus. It is totally normal to feel that way.*

*It sounds like you have a lot of worries about what is going on right now. This is a difficult time for everyone.*

- **Limit media exposure.** The news often focuses on the worst aspects of the virus and hearing that information over and over again can have a significant negative impact on all of us, especially children.
- **Avoid excessive reassurance.** Children who are feeling anxious may repeatedly ask for reassurance, such as frequent requests for gestures of comfort (like hugs) or lots questions seeking reassurance of the safety of themselves and others. While it is often very tempting to provide such reassurance, excessive reassurance can actually reinforce and increase anxiety over time.
- **Focus on what we can control.** There are so many things that are out of our control, but there are things we can do, such as making sure we are staying healthy. Empower your children by letting them know how they can help prevent the spread of the virus through social distancing, hand washing and covering mouths. And also how they can keep their bodies healthy by eating well and being active.
- **Practice coping skills.** Make a list of calming activities and keep it on the fridge. These activities could include coloring, writing in a journal, watching a favorite YouTube video, going for a walk, cooking/baking, and listening to music. Work with you child to learn relaxation strategies, these might include breathing or other mindfulness activities. Learn more at <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/pdf/pe727.pdf> and <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>



RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

<p><u>Counselor/Psychologist email and office hours:</u></p> <p><b>EES</b>          Julie Kratimenos: Julie.kratimenos@eppingsd.org, 9:00am-12:00pm          Marianne McDonough: mmcdonough@eppingsd.org, 8:30am-10:00am, 2:00pm-3:30pm          Kathy Stanley-Berting: KStanley-berting@eppingsd.org, 8:00am-10:00am, 1:00pm-2:00pm</p> <p><b>EMS</b>          Sarah Wagner: swagner@eppingsd.org, 8:30am-10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm          Nick Degruttola: ndegruttola@eppingsd.org, 9:00am-12:00pm</p> <p><b>EHS</b>          Sarah Wagner: swagner@eppingsd.org, 8:30am-10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm          Julie Morin: jmorin@eppingsd.org, 9:00am-10:30am, 1:00pm-2:30pm          Melorah Bisallion: mbisallion@eppingsd.org, 10:30am-1:30pm</p>	<p><u>Community Resources:</u></p> <p>Dial 211 for statewide resources</p> <p>Waypoint confidential support and advice for families: 1-800-640-6486</p> <p>Seacoast Mental Health Center: 431-6703 and 772-2710</p> <p>Unemployment assistance: <a href="http://www.nhes.nh.gov">www.nhes.nh.gov</a></p> <p>Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-237-TALK (8255)</p> <p>Crisis Text Line: Text 741741</p> <p>Community Partners: 516-9300</p> <p>HAVEN: 994-SAFE (7233)</p>
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