



Epping School District Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter Navigating Current Events

June 4, 2020

Dear Epping School Community,

This is certainly an unprecedented time. As I write this, protests against racism and police brutality are occurring in cities across the nation, some of which have erupted in violence. This is only adding to the uncertainty and unease many of us are already feeling due to the coronavirus. It is also very likely that our children have seen, or will see, images of these events. Some children may find this news and the accompanying images and videos confusing, scary or even traumatic. While I had intended on writing this final weekly newsletter with ideas about the upcoming summer, instead I feel compelled to address current events with the intention of supporting families in having conversations about what is going on and managing difficult feelings that may arise. Below you will find some strategies as well as resources if you would like to learn more.

As the school year is coming to a close, this will be our last weekly newsletter. We will be sending out a monthly newsletter instead. We hope that this summer is one of relaxation, play, and family time for all of you. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,
Sarah Wagner and the Epping Counseling Department



NAVIGATING CURRENT EVENTS

- ❖ **Engage in the conversation.** Children and teens will need to process the events they see on the news or come across on social media. It is essential to talk with them about what they are seeing/hearing. A few things to keep in mind:
 - Not talking about upsetting events only fuels fear, anxiety, and uncertainty
 - You do not need to have all the answers. It is okay to not know what to say
 - **Age-appropriate honesty** is essential. It is important to not hide the truth from children but keep in mind what they are able to understand and process based on their age.
 - For younger children, keep things concrete and relate it to their own experience. For example: *“These protests are happening because people are upset that they have not been treated fairly. When have you felt that something was not fair?”*
 - Ask older children what they are seeing on the media. Be sure to watch what they are watching so you can discuss it with them and help them process it
 - **Listen and validate.** Even if you do not agree with what your child is saying, it is important that you allow them to express themselves and let them know that their feelings are okay



❖ **Use media smarts**

- Limit how much media exposure your children have, especially young children
- Be vigilant about ensuring that children are not exposed to violent content. Children can suffer secondary trauma when viewing images of violence.

❖ **Unplug and regroup.**

- Current events can be overwhelming for all of us. We all need to take breaks from the news and social media throughout out day.
- Be sure to get outside to enjoy the fresh air, sunshine, and movement.
- After having a difficult conversation with your child about current events, try to engage them in a calming or fun activity so they can refocus their energy on something positive



❖ **Teach empathy and perspective-taking.**

- These current events present us with a “teachable moment.” We can help our children’s social and emotional development by teaching them to be accepting of differences among people
- This is an opportunity to help our children develop empathy and perspective-taking. You can ask them what they think other people might be thinking or feeling right now. This can be a good way to process images that children come across in the news



❖ **Encourage action.** Some children may feel inspired or angered by these events and want to do something. Encouraging them to engage in action can channel these feelings in a positive way.

- You can encourage younger children to engage in acts of kindness, especially toward someone who may be “different” from them
- Older children can write letters to state or federal legislators and/or the governor in support of social justice reforms
- Teens can volunteer for political campaigns to help elect candidates who support their values and beliefs



Resources for more information:

More on how to talk to your children about these issues:

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/01/health/protests-racism-talk-to-children-wellness/index.html>

<https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/talking-children-after-racial-incidents>

Resources to help educate your children on issues of racial justice:

<https://community.today.com/parentingteam/post/books-to-help-school-aged-children-understand-racism>

https://www.common sense media.org/blog/how-white-parents-can-use-media-to-raise-anti-racist-kids?utm_source=%5Btwitter%5D&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=&utm_term=&utm_content=

<https://www.embracerace.org/>

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

Families First is offering opportunities for parents to connect with other parents online to help decrease the feeling of social isolation we are all facing. These groups are informal with no agenda except for sharing stories and ideas, venting frustrations and reminding ourselves that we are not alone as we get through this challenging time together.




Tuesday Evening Parent Recharge
weekly at 6:30 p.m.
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/540259112>
Meeting ID: 540 259 112

Thursday Morning Parent Recharge
weekly at 9:30 a.m.
<https://zoom.us/j/334557303>
Meeting ID: 334 557 303

Heads Up: Coping through COVID-19

Six-part webinar series on mental health



 Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health



Heads Up: Coping through Covid-19 is a mental health webinar series from Dartmouth-Hitchcock with several webinars focused on parenting: <https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/patient-education/mental-health-webinar-series.html>

Counselor/Psychologist email and office hours:*

EES

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

EMS

Sarah Wagner: swagner@eppingsd.org, 8:30am-
10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Nick Degruttola: ndegruttola@eppingsd.org, 9:00am-
12:00pm

EHS

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

Melora Bisallion: mbisallion@eppingsd.org
10:30am-1:30pm

Community Resources:

Dial 211 for statewide resources

Waypoint confidential support and advice for families: 1-800-640-6486

Seacoast Mental Health Center: 431-6703
and 772-2710

Unemployment assistance: www.nhes.nh.gov

Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-237-TALK
(8255)

Crisis Text Line: Text 741741

Community Partners: 516-9300

HAVEN: 994-SAFE (7233)

*Please note, counselors are not available during the summer. If you are in need of support after June 12th, please refer to one of the community resources listed here.