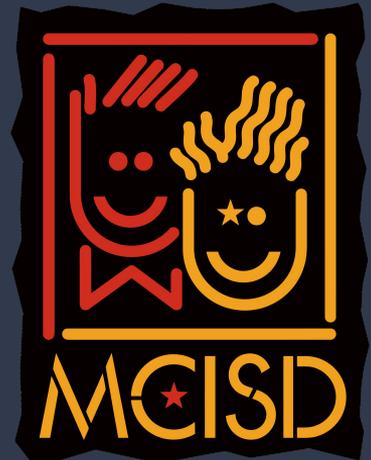


# PAC & MCISD: Supporting the Virtual Family

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# Agenda:

- Wellness Strategy
- Define chronic stress & mental health
- Review COVID-19s Impact on family life
- You Matter: Taking Care of You
- Strategies to support your children's social emotional learning in the home



# Keep



# Grow



# Release



What are you currently experiencing?

# FEELINGS WHEEL



# Chronic Stress & Mental Health

**Chronic Stress:** This is stress resulting from repeated exposure to situations that lead to the release of stress hormones. This type of stress can cause wear and tear on your mind and body. Many scientists think that our stress response system was not designed to be constantly activated.

**Mental Health:** Mental health is defined as our overall emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The state of someone who is “functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment” is engaging in mental health care practices.



# COVID-19 Impact

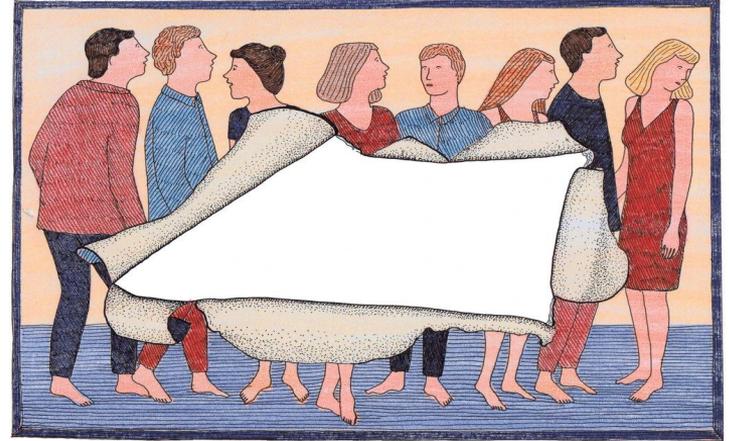
## Impact on Family Life

- 68% of caregivers of children under 5 report a significant increase in stress from before the pandemic
- 78% report their child has been exhibiting behavior problems since most of the United States shuttered schools and daycare in March.
- Hardships on scrambling for time, desperate for space, and leaning heavily on on screens they have tried to limit



# COVID-19 Impact

- **Collective Trauma**
  - Pandemic worldwide
  - Shaken current beliefs
  - Negative Psychological Effects
- **Individual Perception & Experience**
  - Where to seek out Mental Health Support Services
  - Limit Media Exposure
  - Strengthen coping skills



# What is 'typical' behavior right now?

## Grades Pre K - 2

Excessive energy / Hyperactivity  
Frequent crying / Tearfulness  
Separation anxiety  
Increased whining  
Developmental regression  
(for example, toileting accidents)

## Grades 3 - 6

Excessive energy / Hyperactivity  
Excessive worry /  
Repeated questions  
Frequent crying / Tearfulness  
Separation anxiety  
Increased whining  
Boredom

## Grades 7 - 12

Excessive worry /  
Repeated questions  
Poor concentration  
Irritability / Anger  
Difficulty sleeping  
Fatigue  
Boredom



# What is 'typical' behavior right now?

AGE	REACTIONS	HELPFUL RESPONSES
PRE-SCHOOL (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of being alone, bad dreams</li> <li>• Speech difficulties</li> <li>• Loss of bladder/bowel control; constipation, bed-wetting</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> <li>• Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors</li> </ul>	<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>
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior</li> <li>• Clinging, nightmares</li> <li>• Sleep/appetite disturbance</li> <li>• Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)</li> <li>• Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest</li> <li>• Competition for parents' attention</li> <li>• Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience, tolerance, and reassurance</li> <li>• Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through</li> <li>• Regular exercise and stretching</li> <li>• Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games)</li> <li>• Participate in structured household chores</li> <li>• Set gentle but firm limits</li> <li>• Discuss the current outbreak; encourage questions &amp; include what is being done in the family/community</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 including at school</li> <li>• Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation</li> </ul>
TEENS (13-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.)</li> <li>• Sleep/appetite disturbance</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 or cutting school</li> </ul>	<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 phone, 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 during outbreak</li> </ul>

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a disaster 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.

# Strategies to Support YOU

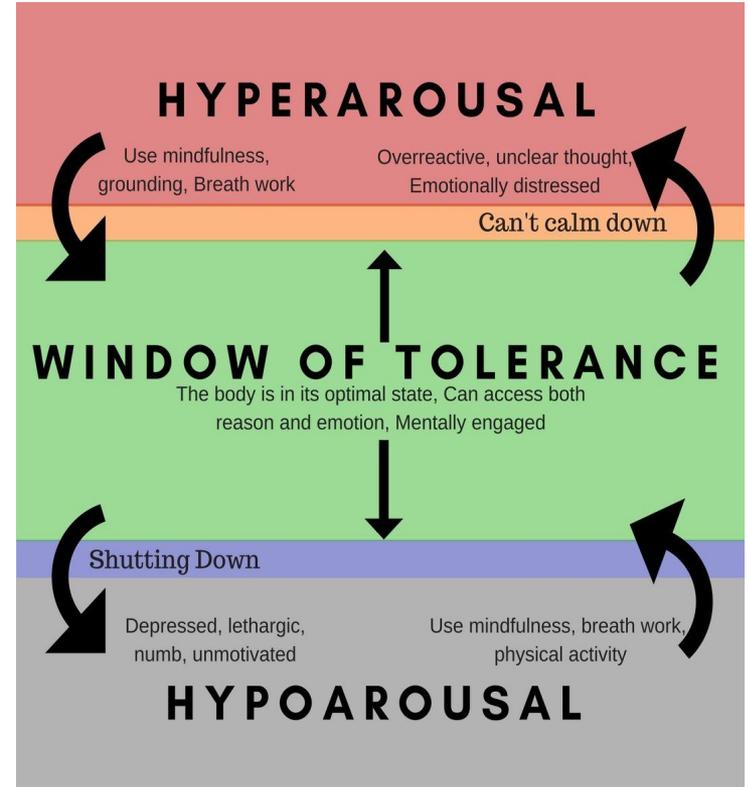


# Managing Stress: Caregivers

## Step 1: Check in with yourself

*“When your circumstances aren’t normal, your parenting will not be normal.”*

- Recognize your own emotional state. Are you going to be able to respond with your best self?
  - How can you approach this with the parent you want to be/are?

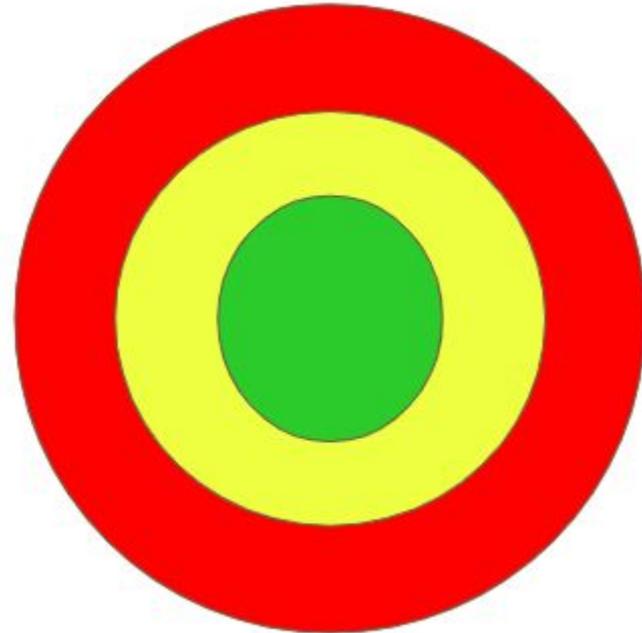


# Reactive vs. Responsive

**Wait a day**

**Wait an hour**

**Ready to talk**



# Managing Stress: Caregivers

## Step 2: Stop and plan your response

- Take a deep breath in order to be responsive rather than reactive
  - Is your child in a place to be responsive? Do they need space and time to process?
- Verbalize your current emotion (frustrated, sad, overwhelmed, anxious, etc)
  - How will your current emotion affect your response? Can you respond right now?
- If you are not in the best place to respond, can you tap someone else in? Can we hit pause?

# Managing Stress: Be Aware of Parenting Traps

- The Escalation Trap
  - Stick to your guns
  - Your response?
- It's Just a Phase Trap
  - Some negative behaviors are to be expected
  - Set limits & Praise
- You do this on Purpose Trap
  - Isn't it easier for us to view it this way? Feeds blame, resentment, animosity

# ***You Matter:***

Please type in the chat one healthy coping skill you have done to manage stress during COVID'19.



# YOU MATTER: Supporting the Caregiver

## Quick exercises you can do daily

- Take a deep breath every time you open your children's chromebook or send an email to your student's teacher
- Practicing Mindfulness & Gratitude
  - Write down one thing that you are grateful for each day
  - Practice Mindful Eating
  - Grounding Exercise: 5 senses
- Behavioral Activation
  - Create a schedule, start small goals, work your way up!
- Celebrate the victories, big and small.



# YOU MATTER: Supporting the Caregiver

## 6 Steps to Belly Breathing

**STEP 1**



Sit in a Comfortable Position

**STEP 2**



Close Your Eyes

**STEP 3**



Breathe In Slowly and Count to Five

**STEP 4**



Feel Your Belly Fill with Air

**STEP 5**



Breathe Out Slowly Through Your Mouth

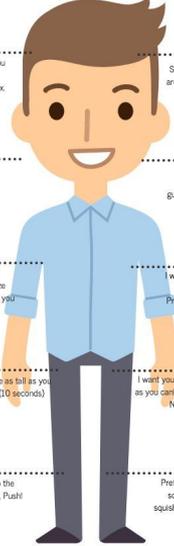
**STEP 6**



Repeat the Cycle Five Times

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

### Whole Body Script



**1 Forehead**  
Scrunch up your forehead like you are thinking hard! Squeeze it tighter, tighter! Now you can relax. (hold for around 10 seconds)

**2 Eyes**  
Squeeze your eyes tight like you are about to blow out the candles on your cake and make a wish! No peeking! (10 seconds)

**3 Cheeks**  
Puff your cheeks out as far as you can! Make them bigger, like you have a mouth full of food! Now, relax. (10 seconds)

**4 Mouth**  
I want you to pretend you are chewing a really big piece of gum! It's really hard to chew, but keep chewing! (10 seconds)

**5 Shoulders**  
I want you to try and touch your shoulder blades together! Squeeze tighter, you're almost there! Now you can relax. (10 seconds)

**6 Arms**  
I want you to make your arms as straight and stiff as possible! Pretend you are frozen! Now you can relax. (10 seconds)

**7 Lower Back**  
Sit up super straight and try to be as tall as you can! Taller! Taller! And now relax. (10 seconds)

**8 Legs**  
I want you to make your legs as straight as you can! Pretend you are frozen again! Now you can relax. (10 seconds)

**9 Feet**  
I want you to press your feet into the ground as hard as you can! Push, Push! And now relax. (10 seconds)

**10 Toes**  
Pretend you are at the beach, and squish your toes in the sand! So squishy! And now relax. (10 seconds)

# Strategies to support your children's learning



# Connecting with your child: Conversation Prompts

Being intentional and specific when asking questions will allow you to facilitate meaningful conversation, aiding in your child's development as an individual as well as your growth as a strong, happy, and connected family.

## TO GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILD BETTER

- What traits do you look for when you're making friends and why?
- What's your favorite thing about yourself?
- What's something that you find embarrassing and why?
- What goal(s) do you have for yourself?

## TO ENHANCE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- What's your favorite thing about your family and why?
- What are some things you've learned from your family?
- If you could make three family rules, what would they be?
- What should we do more of as a family? What do you wish we did less of?
- What do you like best about your siblings? What about your siblings do you find challenging?

## TO HELP SHOW GRATITUDE

- What was the best part about your day and why?
- What are some things you feel grateful for today and why?
- What are some things that you don't need, but you're really happy to have?
- What are some things that are easy to complain about, but can actually be really great?

## TO HELP DEVELOP IMAGINATION

- What's something that makes you excited?
- What do you dream about? What do you wonder?
- If you wrote a book or made a movie, what would it be about?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- What color is the happiest? What color is the angriest? What color is the most excited?

## TO DEVELOP EMPATHY

- How were you able to be kind to someone today?
- How do you think other people feel about the way that you treat them?
- How can you support someone you see who is feeling down, being teased, etc.?
- If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be and why?

## TO DEVELOP MENTAL STRENGTH

- What's your favorite topic/subject to learn about?
- What feeling is the most uncomfortable for you?
- How do you face your fears when you have them?
- Who helps you achieve your goals?

# Connecting with your child: Conversation Prompts

## What to ask instead of



## How was your day?

-  What new fact did you learn today?
-  Who brought the best food in their lunch today? What was it?
-  Did you sing any songs?
-  If one of your classmates could be teacher for the day, who would you pick and why?
-  Did anyone push your buttons today?
-  What is your teacher's most important rule?
-  What was your favorite subject today?
-  What one thing would you change about your school?
-  Who did you play with at recess today?

-  What did you eat for lunch?
-  Did someone do something funny?
-  What did you do at recess?
-  Did anyone do something kind?
-  Who made you smile?
-  Which of your teachers would survive a zombie apocalypse?
-  Who do you want to make friends with but haven't yet?
-  What challenged you today?

-  Did anything make you feel scared today?
-  What book did you read?
-  Did anyone cry today?
-  What did you do that was creative?
-  Tell me about 3 different times you used your pencil today.
-  Did anyone get hurt today?
-  What's the one thing from home you wish you had at school?
-  Was anyone absent today?
-  Who did you sit next to at lunch?
-  If you could teach any subject, what would it be?

# Help kids identify worried thoughts

**Step 1:** Help your child identify their thoughts (Ask: If you were a cartoon, what would your thought bubble say right now?)

**Step 2:** Help your child figure out if this thought is fully true, somewhat true, or not really reasonable (Ask: How do you know this is true? Let's find out more about this. How likely is this?)

**Step 3:** After discussion, help your child come up with a believable, but less worried thought (Ask: What could you tell yourself instead that would help you feel less worried? What would you tell a friend who was having the same thought, to help them realize it wasn't fully true?)

# Healthy vs Unhealthy Coping

- Does this calm me down if I am worried, or help me feel better if I am sad?
- Are there any negative side effects – either right away or later?
- Does this hurt anyone or put anyone in danger, including myself?
- Does this help connect me to friends or family members that I trust?
- Is this something that my teacher or doctor would want me to do?
- How is this like or unlike ways that my family encourages me to cope?

# Strategies & Resources– Elementary

- Ways support your children's social emotional health
  - Play!
  - Have a designated spot at home that is for learning
  - Dress them in comfortable clothes
  - Plan unstructured time
  - [Work with Wiggles](#)
  - Activities & Crafts
    - Glitter Jar
    - Coloring
    - Journaling



# Strategies & Resources– Routines

- Consistent Routines
  - [PBS KIDS: Routines](#)
- Ask yourself: What needs to get done each day? What are your top priorities?
  - Basic needs need to be met
- Wake your children up at the same time each day with an allotted time for breakfast
  - Have general verbal reminders
- Night before a new school day:
  - Set out clothes & Backpack
- Visual Schedule from School:
  - Place in an area where your student can see what will happen at school for the next day



# Strategies & Resources – Middle & High School

## MyStrength App

- 14 & above
- Password: MCMHACommunity

## Behavioral Activation: Get Active!

- Creating a schedule, setting goals, accountability among peers
- Start small, work your way up!



# Resource Packet

- Book list
- Podcast Recommendations
- Phone/Tablet Apps
- Conversation Starters
- PDF of slides
- Self-regulation handout

# We are here for you!

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*Some days, doing "the best we can" may still fall short of what we would like to be able to do, but life isn't perfect – on any front – and doing what we can with what we have is the most we should expect of ourselves or anyone else.*  
— Mr. Fred Rogers

