

March 13, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We understand that right now there are more unknowns than knowns about COVID-19 and what will be happening during the weeks to come. We also understand that each of our students will have different reactions to this pandemic and we want to continue to support all of our families during this time. Below are 10 ways to help kids cope with anxiety. These are not our ideas and they have been compiled from two different articles that are listed at the bottom of this page.

From Dr. Sabrina Stutz, pediatric psychologist at Children's Hospital of Orange County

Listen to your kids - They will be looking to you for answers and, while we don't have them, we can tell them that it is perfectly normal to be frightened when a new illness comes around that we don't know anything about. Gently correct any misconceptions and maintain a routine as much as possible.

Stick to the facts - There are so many ways to gather information, monitor their exposure to media reports about the virus. Remind them that healthcare professionals around the world are working hard to stop the virus.

Encourage a routine - Students will have work to complete but will also have more free time than normal. Please encourage them to keep a routine. It is important they did not spend too much time sleeping or up at night when they should be sleeping. Establishing daily routines and checklists each day can help to sustain their mental health.

Emphasize kindness - As always, it is important to be kind, however, it is extremely important to be patient with others as we all navigate this pandemic.

From Dr. Doreen Marshall, Ph.D

Separate what is in your control from what is not - Again, wash hands and encourage others to wash their hands as well. Take vitamins, eat right and limit your consumption of the news.

Do what helps you feel a sense of security - This will be different for everyone and it is important to not compare yourself to others. If you choose to limit your attendance at large gatherings based on the potential for illness, that is fine. Just be cautious that you are not limiting your attendance due to depression.

Get outside - even if you are avoiding crowds - Talk a walk around the neighborhood. Sunshine and fresh air are important during this time. Exercise helps both your physical and mental health.

Stay in the present - Perhaps you find yourself worrying about what is currently happening and also about what will happen in the future. When you find yourself worrying about the future, bring yourself back to the present. Notice sights, sounds, tastes and other sensory experiences. Engage in Mindfulness.

Stay connected and reach out if you need more support - Talk to trusted friends and family. If you are feeling particularly anxious, you can reach out to mental health professionals. 211 is an excellent resource to call for help and they can get you in touch with the correct professional. The Crisis Text Line is 741741 - text Talk to this number and someone will be available to text. Also, the Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

We are also recommending the following:

Reassure them by empowering them - Tell kids that they can protect themselves and others by washing their hands for at least 20 seconds and teach them proper cough etiquette. Allow them to take part in family preparations, for example, if you are preparing to be home for an extended period of time, allow them to pick out snacks or choose activities that the family can enjoy together.

We are all in this together and help is always available. We are including some links to other articles as well as the articles where this information was obtained. We will be in our offices next week and you may reach us during regular school hours if your child needs to speak with someone. To reach Mrs. Clark at the high school, her direct line is 740-238-7101 and to reach Mrs. Windnagel, please call either Stevenson or Garfield Elementary. We are very much looking forward to the day when we can all come back together again as normal, but until that day, know that we are here and willing to help.

Sincerely,

Tara Clark
HHS Counselor

Jennifer Windnagel
Elementary Counselor

Articles used for this document:

<https://blog.chocchildrens.org/7-ways-to-help-kids-cope-with-coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety/>

<https://afsp.org/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR0rcn45AErnXynr09PjVzRGEukPNxcGFqCaXKF0w3Klw2XVUH20R6nWE7w>

Additional articles:

<https://www.tinabryson.com/news/coronavirus-talking-points-for-parents-amp-teachers-with-the-whole-brain-child-approach>

<https://houstonfamilycounseling.org/pandemic-parenting-how-to-keep-kids-calm-in-the-face-of-coronavirus/>

https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/57018681-e4e3-4c01-9d21-f9f2b9c86614/COVID-19%2BFAQs%2Bupdated%2B03-04-20.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIK0N0JO00QO9DDDDM3000-57018681-e4e3-4c01-9d21-f9f2b9c86614-n37IKA2