

Hello Parents/Guardians,

Please see the links below for useful and informative information regarding the Coronavirus and the stress and anxiety that surrounds it. These links provide parents/guardians with valuable talking points to facilitate meaningful conversations with children about the current events. They also include ideas for activities that parents/guardians can do with children in order to keep both children and adults stress levels low. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns as you and your child navigate this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Dr. MollyAnne Light-Stevenson, LAC, PsyD Social Emotional Counselor

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<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-you-and-your-kids-can-de-stress-during-coronavirus>

Anxiety & Stress

Children experience anxiety on daily basis. This anxiety can occur as a result of an upcoming test, a conflict with a friend, changing classroom seats, and many more influences. The degree to which it affects children varies vastly from child to child. The same goes for the anxiety surrounding the Coronavirus. For some children this is a very confusing time. Some children will internalize their anxiety, causing it to manifest in other ways (anger, frustration, sadness), while other children will speak openly about their worries. Some children may not be affected at all, or may experience mild symptoms of stress. There is no right or wrong way for you and your child to process events, but we can do our part to help manage our feelings. Please see below for signs and symptoms of excess stress and anxiety and some tips for helping your child manage their stress during this difficult and confusing time.

Children with excess stress & anxiety symptoms may include:

Restlessness; fatigue; muscle tension
Loss of appetite
Trouble concentrating
Irritability or crying a lot
Trouble sleeping (insomnia)
Wanting to be around parent/guardian non-stop
Newly developed fear (dark, being alone)

Here are things you can do at home to help your child manage his or her stress & anxiety:

*The goal is not to eliminate the anxiety, rather it is to plan an important role in helping your child manage it

Think things through with the child, help him or her remain calm and realistic about stressful thoughts and events

Pay attention to your child's feelings-check in daily about their stress level

Stay calm when your child becomes anxious about a situation or event-answer questions they may have-encourage questions

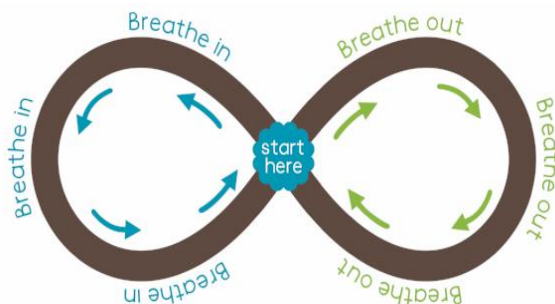
Ask your child how they are sleeping; inquire about dreams or how often they are waking up

Don't punish mistakes or lack of progress when working on at-home schooling assignments

Encourage your child to work through their anxiety, reinforce the belief that anxiety is a state of mind and can be managed

Be flexible, but try to maintain a normal routine-breathe together in the morning, and before bed

Modify expectations during stressful periods



Exercises to help reduce stress and anxiety:

Practice physical stimulation- watch a yoga/stretching video together

Practice mindful breathing:

Alternate Nostril Breathing- using your thumb and ring finger-

- use thumb to close one nostril and inhale with other
- once inhale is complete, hold the inhale, and use ring finger to close that nostril
- exhale through the open nostril, repeat- close that nostril with thumb and inhale
- hold that inhale, switch to ring finger and close that nostril and so on...

Belly breathing-hold one hand on heart and one hand on belly- practice long inhales, extending belly out as you inhale

5-4-3-2-1-help children to stay in the present (to stop thinking about past or future fears)

*can be combined with belly breathing

-have children look around their surroundings and name:

5 things they see 4 things they hear 3 things they smell (or like the smell of) 2 things they can touch or feel

1 way they are feeling inside *(repeat 5-1 as many times as needed)

Trace Figure 8's-use the template above to trace figure 8's with finger as you inhale and exhale- can do this anywhere (do not need the template)