

Helping Students Process Feelings THROUGH COVID-19

The first step to processing your emotions is to understand what those feelings are and where they come from.

WHAT ARE STUDENTS FEELING RIGHT NOW?

Sad, Upset, Anxious, Angry, Frustrated
- From the CDC

Alarm, Worry, Confusion, Panic, Fear, Frantic
- From the Cleveland Clinic

REMEMBER: Students will experience positive emotions, too. They might be happy to be home and excited to spend time together. Focus on recognizing all emotions.

WARNING SIGNS: STUDENTS MAY NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROCESSING

- Excessive crying, worrying or sadness.
- Returning to behavior they have outgrown.
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past.
- Unexplained headaches or body pains.
- Problems falling asleep and staying asleep.
- Irritability and "acting out."
- Difficulty with attention and concentration.
- Clinging to caregivers.
- Aggressive or angry.
- Withdrawn.

From the CDC and Dr. Howard Osofsky & Dr. Joy Osofsky

What are YOU feeling right now?

Check in with yourself regularly.

How are you feeling?

Express your feelings in a way that feels comfortable for you.

Practice self care.

You can't pour from an empty cup.

You'll be better able to support students, if you feel well yourself.

Model SEL strategies.

Share your feelings and your emotional management strategies.

Students will learn from watching you!

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The next step in processing emotions is to practice habits that help you express your feelings and the feelings of those around you.

VALIDATE FEELINGS

1

- Listen carefully and thank them for sharing: "Thank you for telling me that _____."
- Ask open ended questions: What have you heard about the virus? How does that make you feel?
- Maintain an open dialogue and provide opportunities for questions.
- Do activities that encourage opportunities for conversation, such as: baking, puzzles, games or crafts!

PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION

- Determine what your child already knows about the virus and what they would like to learn.
- Explain the truth in a way they will understand. For young children, use words like "germs" rather than "virus."
- Keep your information focused on prevention, like hand washing and staying home for now. Try not to focus on the "what ifs?"

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OFFER REASSURANCE

3

- Remember the helpers: Doctors, nurses and healthcare workers are working hard to keep everyone safe and healthy right now!
- Brainstorm ways you can support your community, maybe by making thank you cards, donating money or goods, or making face masks.
- Focus on the good. Find a station or platform that is focused on sharing stories of good news!

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MAINTAIN REGULAR ROUTINES

- Do your best to keep your regular routines for activities like bedtime, meals and playtime.
- Create a schedule for learning at home. Schools may be able to help provide a routine or structure.
- Incorporate 1-2 new things in your routine that will help you take care of yourself, incorporate play and fun, and keep each day feeling a little different.

MONITOR MEDIA HABITS

- Try to watch, listen or read the news together to spark discussion.
- If you notice the news is sparking fear or negativity, turn it off!
- Set limitations about when you will check the news and media to guard against getting "sucked in."
- Be mindful of social media use and pay special attention to following accounts that make you feel good.

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BE A ROLE MODEL FOR HEALTHY HABITS

- Take breaks throughout the day. Get away from your screens!
- Prioritize sleep. A solid bed time routine will help.
- Incorporate movement into each day. A quick walk or stretch can go a long way.
- Eat well.
- Connect with family and friends regularly. Try to talk about non-coronavirus related topics.