



# Tools for Families:

## Partners in Supporting Our Children



**NJPSAFE**

New Jersey  
**PTA**<sup>®</sup>  
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# Welcome

## **Patricia Wright**

President of the Foundation for Educational Administration and Executive Director of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

## **Cathy Lindenbaum**

President of the New Jersey Parent Teacher Association

## **Donna McInerney**

CEO of the Foundation for Educational Administration

## **Jim Lukach**

Executive Director New Jersey School Counselors Association



# Family Experiences

- OVERWHELMED!
  - Teacher / Tutor
  - Technology Expert / Challenges
  - Parent
  - Cook/Clean
  - Still working / Lost job
  - And the list goes on...

# Sources of Strength

George Scott, Ed.S, LMFT

Statewide Resource Coordinator

Traumatic Loss Coalition





# Today's Challenges

- Maintaining family health
- Maintaining sense of order and routine
- Children's behavior
- Managing fear and sadness
- Enjoying time with your children
- Staying connected to others

# Sources of Strength

What strengths do you and your family have?

- Identifying strengths
- Building on strengths



# Self Care for Parents

What do you currently do? Build on strengths!

- Alone time
- Physical activity and exercise
- Reading
- Outdoor time - walks, gardening, sitting in the sun
- Sleep
- Healthy eating
- Other

# Self Care for Children

- Daily routines - bedtime, mealtime, school time, playtime/freetime
- Enough sleep
- Healthy eating
- Movement and exercise
- Virtual social time with friends

# Establishing Routines

## Four Pillars of Mental Health Routines:

- Bedtime
- Mealtimes
- Work Time (school work, chores, etc.)
- Play Time/Free Time



# Sleep Routines

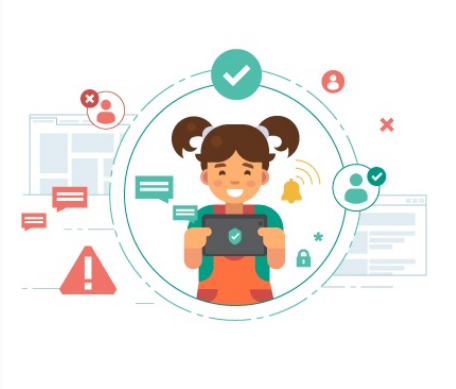
- Plan the right amount of sleep
- Establish time to go to bed and get up in the morning
- Stick to bedtime routines
- Limit access to media in the bedroom



# Staying Calm

- Find your calm then lend your calm
- Children pay attention to how you react. How you react says more to them than what you say.
- Learn to express not repress
- Be positive and reassuring

# Filter the Media



- News
- Social Media
- Games
- Too much exposure can be toxic - we absorb feelings and behaviors that we see



# Pre-School and Elementary

Kaitlin Mulcahy, Ph.D.

Montclair State University



# What is mental health in young children?

- Enjoy relationships with caregivers and friends
- Play by themselves and with others
- Express emotions
- Go to adults for comfort and be able to comfort themselves
- Feel safe
- Be curious

# Tips for Helping Children During the Pandemic

1. Be available
2. Let them know they are safe
3. Teach your child things they can do to be safe
4. Create daily routines - build in family time
5. Limit exposure to news - share what kids need to know but not all you know

# Be Available

- Being responsive to your child's needs: "I see your body has some extra energy today. Do you want to go for a walk or have a dance party?"
- Listening to your child and talking about their feelings: "I know you feel disappointed that you can't go to school to see your friends."
- Answering questions: "She is wearing a mask because she is keeping us safe by covering her mouth."



# Let Them Know They Are Safe

- “The leaders in our community have made a plan for us to stay safe. I am going to help you be safe.”
- “We cannot go to grandma’s house right now, but we can Face Time her. She loves you so much, and that would make her so happy!”



# Teach Children Things to Do to Be Safe and Be Helpful

- “We are going to wash our hands for 20 seconds. This will get the germs that could make us sick off of our hands. What song do you want to sing?”
- Show your child how to cover their cough.
- Take positive action - bring food to food bank, make positive signs, create masks

# Create Written Daily Routines

## SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

7:30-8:55: Breakfast, dress, relax  
(possibly walk dog)

8:55-9: [GoNoodle](#) or walk to move  
before work

9-9:30am: Writing

9:30am-10am: Art project

10-10:30am: Snack break

10:30-11:30am: Math workbook + Zearn

11:30-12:30: Lunch/recess

1230-1pm: Science project

1-2pm: Go Noodle, Free reading + jotting

2-2:30pm: Snack

2:30-3:30pm Baking/art/self-driving interest project (child must also  
clean up)

3:30-4:30pm: Educational tablet time (kid choice)

4:30pm onward: Freeplay/screen time at will

# Children's Responses to Stress

- Behaviors that challenge adults: What pushes your buttons?
- Sleeping and eating problems
- Agitation
- Increase in conflicts
- Physical complaints
- Poor concentration



# Challenging Behavior: Prevention

## Use Positive Attention

- Catch your child being good!
- Use positive facial expressions such as smiles or funny faces.
- Use descriptive praise: “You cleaned up breakfast all by yourself” or “Your brother looked so happy when you read the book to him.”
- Give **extra** attention when they are good

# Challenging Behavior: Prevention

**Stick to routines**

**Let children know clearly what the rules are for behavior**

**Plan ideas ahead of time to keep them busy**



# Handling Misbehavior

**Stay Calm** | **Reflect** | **Re-Connect**

Is your child experiencing tantrums? Anger? Frustration?

The best approach is to remain calm or you can make it worse. Let's look at steps to stay calm



# Step 1: Calm Yourself



Drink some  
water;  
Have a snack



Count until calm



Connect  
with a friend



Take deep  
breaths



Ask for help



Think some-  
thing positive  
or fun about  
your child

## Step 2: **Reflect**

What feelings and thoughts came up?

How do you think your child is feeling?

What might your child need to prevent the behavior from occurring again?

Are you calm enough to re-connect with your child?

## Step 3: **Re-Connect**

When you re-connect, you can help your child learn new skills. Once you feel calm, and your child appears calm, here are a few tips.



Make sure your  
child is calm

I see that not  
getting a turn  
made you angry.

Acknowledge  
feelings



Offer choice

Let's find a  
new toy.

Redirect to a  
new activity



Talk and play  
with your child

# Middle and High School

Tim Conway, MA, MEd, LPC - Parent, Educator, & Clinician

Director of Counseling, Lakeland Regional High School

Geta Vogel EdSp

Consultant, NJPSA/FEA



# Emotional Solutions

- Model self-care
  - Make sure to take breaks for yourself (put your mask on first).
- Model a calm environment
  - This will help your children process the changes.
- Take time to talk about COVID-19
  - Share information so they understand based on their developmental age.
  - Some youth prefer to draw, write, or act their frustrations.





# Emotional Solutions

- Turn a negative into a positive!
  - Create a family project to thank first responders on the internet, posters, etc...
  - Create a video “class” or “family” chat so our kids can see their friends.
- Mindfulness activities, individually or as a family.
  - Mindful eating
  - Mindful breathing
  - Mindful walking
  - Mindful visualization



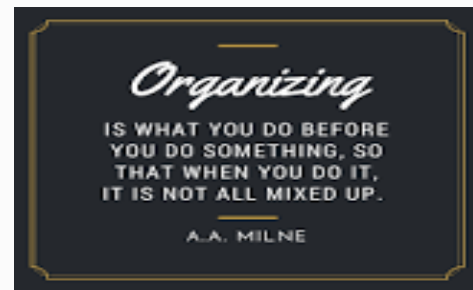
# Adolescent Responses to Stress

- Behaviors that challenge adults: What pushes your buttons?
- Sleeping and eating problems
- Agitation
- Increase in conflicts
- Physical complaints
- Poor concentration



# Organization

- Create a structured learning environment at home.
  - Set time and places for children to do their work.
- Help your younger (and maybe older) children to [organize](#) their tasks so they don't get overwhelmed.
- Keep a "normal" routine.
  - Get a good night's sleep!
  - Healthy diet and family meals.
  - Build family "exercise" or "play" time.



# Scheduling Issues

Create a structured schedule for the family

- Sharing space
- Sharing technology
- Break times
- Sharing parent attention/help



# Technology Issues

- No computer or WiFi is available
- Do not learn well via the computer
- Do not have the supports needed at home (e.g., disability)
- Internet crashed
- Troubleshooting computer issues (e.g., video not working)



# Solutions to Technology Issues

- Ask your school district if there is a computer you can borrow.
  - Perhaps even a WiFi router or free WiFi in your community
  - Can work be sent home in paper or other accommodations (e.g., disability).
- Do not learn well via the computer
  - Help them to create structure (e.g., task chart).
  - Schedule timed breaks.
- Sounds funny, but restarting the computer can help.
- Youtube is a good resource to fix minor issues (e.g., video not working).



# Who can I ask for help??

- Ask your school for help
  - Administrators
  - Teachers
  - School Counselor
  - Case Manager (for students with an Individualized Education Plan)
- Ask your child or family and friends for help
- Look up activities and other resources in this PPT or online
- Call a mental health counselor



# Get Back to Your Normal?

- Draw
- Run/Walk
- Fishing
- Have a catch
- Happy hour
- Sit outside
- Garden
- Whatever floats your boat!!!





# Resources

- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) A Parent Resource](#)
- [Khan Academy](#) (academic self-help videos)
- [Common Sense Media](#) (apps, ideas, videos for kids & parents)
- [Coronavirus Information Link](#)

# Take Away from our Webinar

## Multi-Age Recommendations

1. Identify and Build Sources of Strength
2. Establish Self Care for Children
  - Create a daily schedule for each child with their name(s) and adhere to them. Remember, routine is important.
  - Take care of yourself and your children by eating healthy, getting daily exercise and a good night's sleep.
  - Socialization is important for everyone.
3. Stay calm. Children react to the way you express yourself.
4. Filter daily media. Overexposure is overwhelming!

### **Sustaining Mental Health:**

1. Children need to feel safe and to be able to express themselves.
2. Be Responsive.
3. Listen to your children.
4. Teach them things that they can do to keep safe. (Wash hands while singing the alphabet song, at least 20 seconds).
5. Keep in mind that stress can cause multiple issues in children, such as:
  - a. Poor eating and sleep patterns.
  - b. Potential increase in combative behavior, “pushing buttons”, increase in conflicts.

## Handling Misbehavior...

1. **Calm yourself.** Take big breaths, call a friend, count, drink water.
2. **Reflect.** Gather your thoughts, think about how your child is feeling, think about what needs to be done to prevent recurrence.
3. **Reconnect** - Make sure your child is calm, offer choices, acknowledge feelings, talk/play with child.
4. **Emotional Solutions...**
5. Model self-care. (put on mask, first)
6. Turn the negative into a positive. This is a good opportunity for family projects.

## Who Can I Ask for Help?

1. School personnel, a school counselor, or case manager.
2. A religious leader.
3. Family or Friends.
4. Professional Counselor.

# Remember

It is important to



and Equally important to stay Strong!



# Webinar Presentation Team

Cathy Lindenbaum- President, NJPTA

Patricia Wright, Executive Director NJPSA and President FEA

Jim Lukach, Executive Director of NJ School Counselors Association;

George Scott, Traumatic Loss Coalition

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