

Coping with Stress During COVID-19

Mellanie Fraser & Tyler Chaisson



Covid 19-Grief and Loss

- Loss of:
 - Social supports
 - Income
 - Routines
 - Connectedness
- Inability to attend:
 - Celebrations
 - Graduations
 - Weddings
 - Funerals



Anxiety

Typically, children with anxiety often have anxious parents that model and reinforce anxious behaviours.

Do we as educators and parents continue to reinforce this?



8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

FOCUS

6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.





What Stress Looks Like in Our Children

Preschool Children

- Feel helpless and uncertain
- Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver
- Cry and/or scream a lot
- Eat poorly and lose weight
- Return to bedwetting
- Return to using baby talk
- Develop new fears
- Have nightmares
- Recreate the trauma through play
- Are not developing to the next growth stage
- Have changes in behavior
- Ask questions about death

Elementary School Children

- Become anxious and fearful
- Worry about their own or others' safety
- Become clingy with a teacher or parent
- Feel guilt or shame
- Tell others about the traumatic event again and again
- Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Experience numbness
- Have fears that the event will happen again
- Have difficulty sleeping
- Show changes in school performance
- Become easily startled

Middle and High School Children

- Feel depressed and alone
- Discuss the traumatic events in detail
- Develop eating disorders and self-harming behaviors such as cutting
- Start using or abusing alcohol or drugs
- Become sexually active
- Feel like they're going crazy
- Feel different from everyone else
- Take too many risks
- Have sleep disturbances
- Don't want go to places that remind them of the event
- Say they have no feeling about the event
- Show changes in behavior

Fight, Flight, or Freeze Response

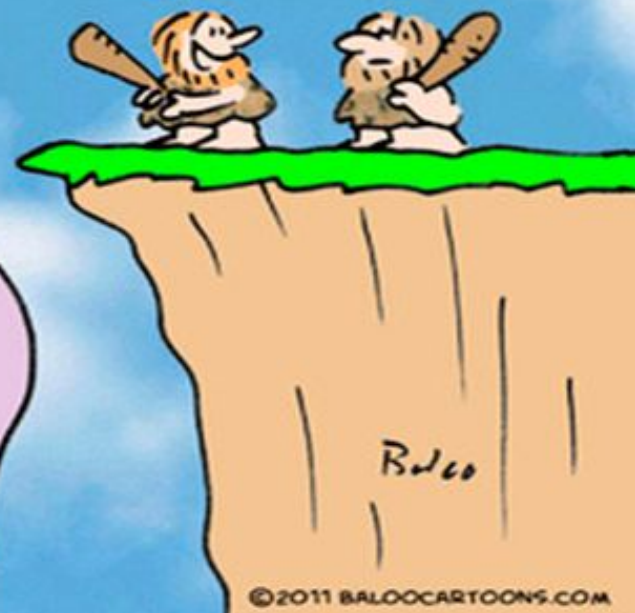


How Emotions Impacts Us



Research is making strides into the root causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD is not a political statement but rather a physical condition.

C'MON - HELP ME BRING HIM DOWN,
AND I'LL **SPLIT** HIM WITH YOU!



CBT - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy





Positive Self-Talk

Can decrease stress and enhance overall well-being

- I am strong
- I can ask for help
- Things are going to be ok
- I can do things to help myself
- I can handle it/I can get through this
- I am safe
- All of my feelings are ok





Breathing Techniques

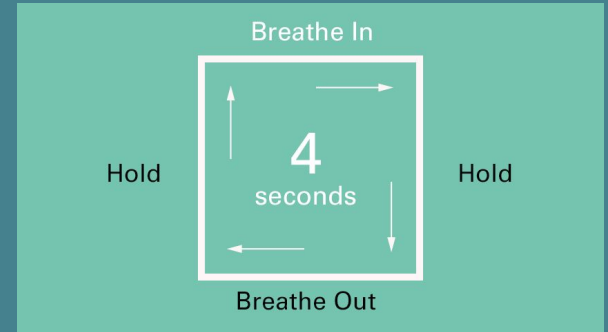
Decreases stress and cortisol levels

1. **Pick the Technique They Like the Best**
2. **Teach Breath Work Before They'll Actually Need It**
3. **Practice Makes Perfect**
4. **How to Use it in the Moment**
5. **Model Mindful Breathing Yourself**

Breathing Techniques

The more you practice it, the more it can work

1. Rose & Candle
2. Belly Breathing
3. Box or Square Breathing
4. Bunny or Bee Breathing
5. Starfish Breathing





Family Activities

1. Chill
2. Exercise
3. Sleep
4. Unplug
5. Discover New Recipes
6. Get Creative
7. Self Care
8. Family Games Day
9. Family Dance Party
10. Laugh
11. Virtual Get-Togethers
12. Nature

Local Resources



THE HUB
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

<https://www.thehubfrc.ca/>



To learn more or register for any Family Resource Network program visit
[thehubfrc.ca/frn](https://www.thehubfrc.ca/frn) or call 780.743.9225 ext 0



Local Resources

- **FMPSD**

<https://fmpsd.com/mentalhealth>

- **Alberta Health Services**

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-mental-health-toolkit.pdf>





Q & A

tyler.chaisson@fmprsd.ab.ca
mellanie.fraser@fmprsd.ab.ca