

## MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

# COVID-19

- **What is COVID?**

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person.

- **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

- COVID-19 symptoms can be very mild to severe. Some people have no symptoms.
- The most common symptoms are fever, cough and tiredness.
- Other symptoms may include: shortness of breath, muscle aches, chills, sore throat, headache, chest pain, and loss of taste or smell.
- This list is not all inclusive. Other less common symptoms have also been reported. Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure.

# OVERALL IMPACT OF COVID ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

- **COVID-19 symptoms can sometimes persist for months. The virus can damage the lungs, heart and brain, which increases the risk of long-term health problems.**
  - Fatigue
  - Shortness of breath
  - Cough
  - Joint pain
  - Chest pain
- **Other long-term signs and symptoms may include:**
  - Muscle pain or headache
  - Fast or pounding heartbeat
  - Loss of smell or taste
  - Memory, concentration or sleep problems
  - Rash or hair loss

# OVERALL IMPACT OF COVID ON MENTAL HEALTH

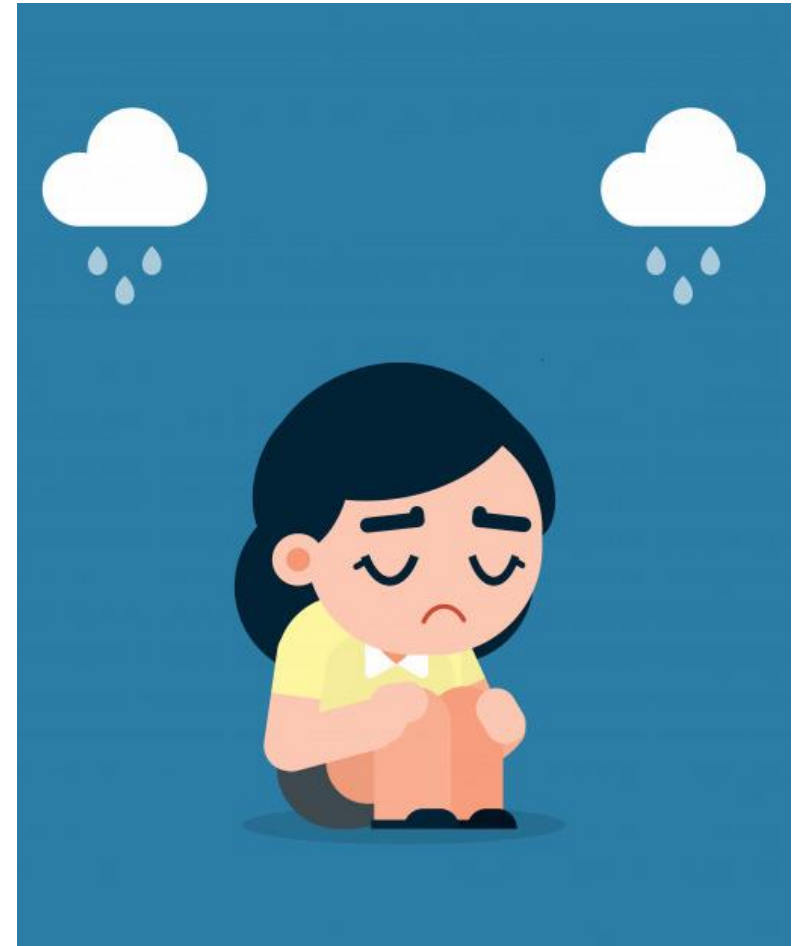
- Events/outcomes that have impacted our overall mental health:
  - Testing positive for COVID
  - Social distancing/social isolation
  - Altered daily routines
  - Uncertainty
  - Financial pressure

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

- Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.
- Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.
- Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected.
- Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:
  - Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
  - Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
  - Family history of mental health problems
- **Common Mental Health Disorders:** Depression, Anxiety, Substance Abuse, Suicide, Conduct Disorder, OCD

# DEPRESSION

- **What is Depression?**
  - Depression, otherwise known as major depressive disorder or clinical depression, is a common and serious mood disorder.
  - Those who suffer from depression experience persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness and lose interest in activities they once enjoyed.
  - Aside from the emotional problems caused by depression, individuals can also present with a physical symptom such as **chronic pain** or **digestive issues**.
  - To be diagnosed with depression, symptoms must be present for at least two weeks.



# ANXIETY

- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) can be a challenge to diagnose. People consider panic attacks a hallmark of all anxiety disorders, but GAD is different in that there are generally no panic attacks associated with the condition.
- As a result of this misconception, without the experience of panic attacks, a person may think they are "just worrying too much." Their struggles with constant worry may be minimized or dismissed and, in turn, not properly diagnosed or treated.
- Most of us experience worry and situations that can cause us to feel anxious, so what are professionals looking for to help determine if someone's worry and anxiety are related to GAD?



# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- What is Substance Abuse Disorder?
  - The DSM 5 recognizes substance-related disorders resulting from the use of 10 separate classes of drugs: alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; hallucinogens (phencyclidine or similarly acting hallucinogens, such as LSD); inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics, or anxiolytics; stimulants (including amphetamine-type substances, cocaine, and other stimulants); tobacco; and other or unknown substances.
  - The activation of the brain's reward system is central to problems arising from drug use. The rewarding feeling that people experience as a result of taking drugs may be so profound that they neglect other normal activities in favor of taking the drug.
  - There are two groups of substance-related disorders: substance-use disorders and substance-induced disorders.
    - Substance-use disorders are patterns of symptoms resulting from the use of a substance that you continue to take, despite experiencing problems as a result.
    - Substance-induced disorders, including intoxication, withdrawal, and other substance/medication-induced mental disorders, are detailed alongside substance use disorders.





# SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR DISORDER

- **What is Suicide Behavior Disorder?**
  - **Suicidal Behavior Disorder** is characterized by attempted suicide within the past two years, and does not include behaviors such as suicidal ideation and non-suicidal, self-injurious behavior.
- Knowing what characterizes a suicidal attempt, suicidal ideation, and non-suicidal self-injury, can be helpful in understanding Suicidal Behavior Disorder.
  - **Suicidal Attempt** – A deliberate, self-destructive act with a clear expectation of death that's non-fatal.
  - **Suicidal Ideation** – Thinking about, considering, or making plans for suicide.
  - **Non-Suicidal, Self-Injury** – An act of self-harm that is not intended to result in death.



# RISK FACTORS

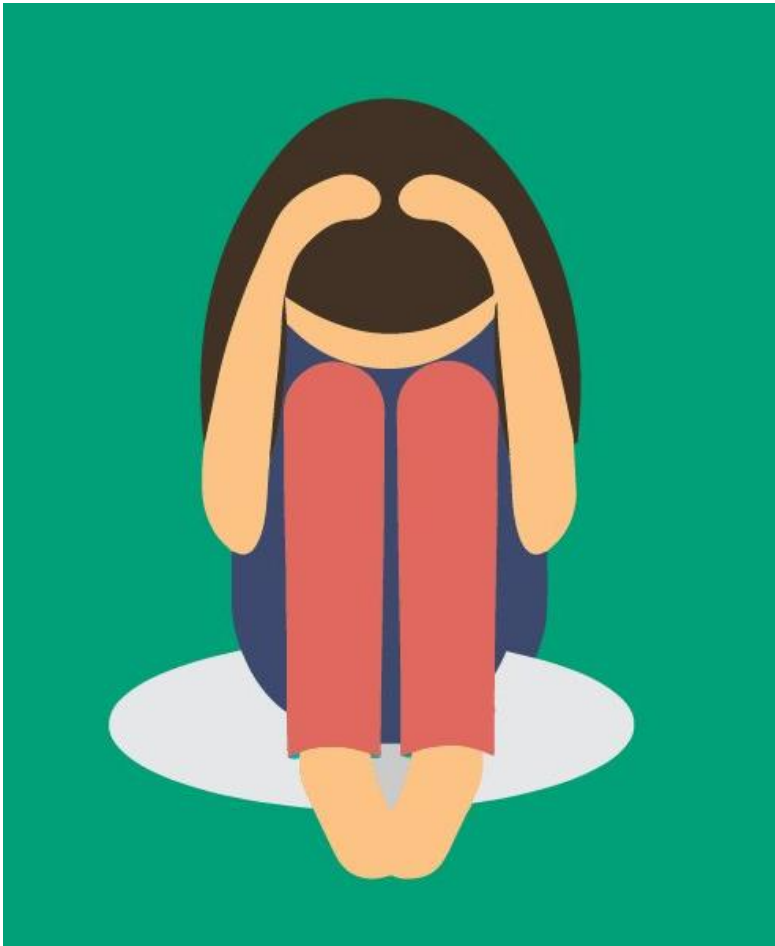
- The risk factors for Suicidal Behavior Disorder include:
  - Previous suicidal attempts
  - History of self-harm
  - Family history of suicide
  - Exposure to suicidal behavior
  - Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, or Depression
  - Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective Disorder
  - Anxiety, Panic Disorder, or PTSD
  - Eating Disorder
  - Abuse of drugs or alcohol
  - Serving time in prison
  - History of abuse or witnessing abuse
  - Aging
  - Death of a loved one
  - Receiving a diagnosis for a serious medical condition
  - Low job security or job satisfaction or unemployment
  - Relationship problems
  - Social isolation or bullying, especially cyberbullying

# CONDUCT DISORDER



- What is Conduct Disorder?
  - Conduct disorder is a repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated, as manifested by the presence of at least three of the following 15 criteria in the past 12 months from any of the categories below, with at least one criterion present in the past 6 months:
  - The disturbance in behavior causes clinically significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning.
  - If the individual is age 18 years or older, criteria are not met for antisocial personality disorder.

# OBSESSIVE COMPULSION DISORDER (OCD)



- What is OCD?
  - Recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges or images that are experienced, at some time during the disturbance, as intrusive, unwanted, and that in most individuals cause marked anxiety or distress.
  - The individual attempts to ignore or suppress such thoughts, urges, or images, or to neutralize them with some thought or action (i.e., by performing a compulsion)
- Compulsion Defined as
  1. Repetitive behaviors (e.g., hand washing, ordering checking) or mental acts (e.g., praying, counting, repeating words silently) that the person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession, or according to the rules that must be applied rigidly
  2. The behaviors or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing distress or preventing some dreaded event or situation. However, these behaviors or mental acts either are not connected in a realistic way with what they are designed to neutralize or prevent or are clearly excessive.

# SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

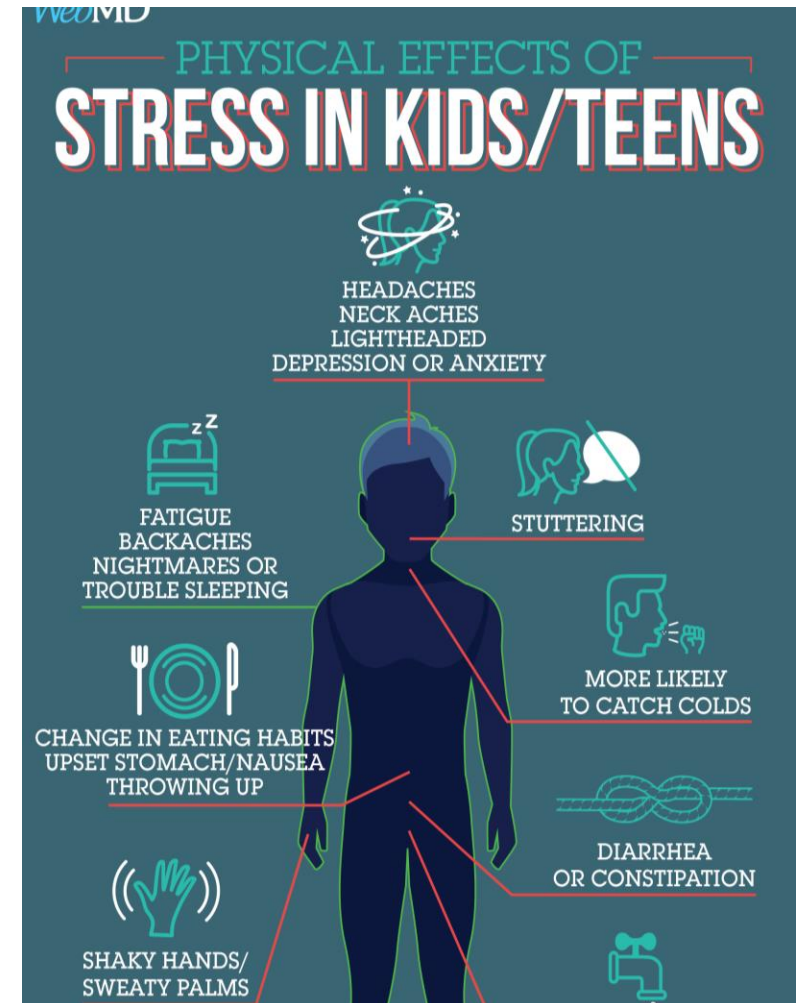
- Stress
- Excessive worry or anxiety
- Fear
- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Disobedience or aggression
- Extreme mood changes
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating & learning
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits
- Changes in school performance
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Thinking about suicide

<https://youtu.be/zt4sOjVwV3M>

<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms>

# PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF STRESS IN KIDS/TEENS

- Headaches
- Neck aches
- Lightheaded
- Depression or Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Back pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea/Constipation
- Weak immune system



# COPING

- Coping with .....
- The loss of routine
- Isolation/Loneliness
- Unemployment
- Substance Abuse
- Suicide

## COPING WITH GRIEF CAUSED BY THE LOSS OF ROUTINE

- Grief caused by loss of your normal routine:
  - Loss of attachments to co-workers, work, other people, places, identity.
  - Grief may cause you to feel empty, angry, unable to feel joy or sadness.
  - You may also experience trouble with sleeping or eating, excess fatigue, muscle weakness.



# COPING WITH GRIEF

- Grief helps you recognize that you have experienced a loss and that your survival depends on being able to adapt.
  - Strategies to deal with Grief:
    - Pay attention to your feelings: What have you lost due to pandemic? Journal writing. Its okay to feel sad or cry.
    - Strengths and coping skills: Consider other tough transitions you have been through, such as job changes, divorce, losses. What did you do that helped you recover?
    - Stay connected: phone calls, text messages, video chat, and social media.
    - Establish a routine: Keep a regular sleep schedule and try to maintain a healthy diet.

## COPING WITH GRIEF CONT.

- Limit news viewing:
  - Too much time listening to news about COVID-19 may increase anxiety.
- Look at the big picture:
  - Everyone is being impacted one way or another.
- Be creative:
  - Exercise, hobbies, cooking, gardening, art, meditating, worship
- Focus on the present:
  - Things you can control
- As time goes by and you adapt your feeling of grief will lessen.
- Seek help from a mental health provider

# COPING WITH ISOLATION/LONELINESS

- Social distancing prevents kids from spending time with their peers during an important period of growth and social development (sense of belonging and personal identity).
- What is the impact of loneliness on kids?
  - Research indicates the impact of loneliness and isolation, over extended periods, is linked to mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety in the following years.
  - Can worsen existing mental health conditions

## COPING WITH ISOLATION/LONELINESS CONT.

- Strategies to deal with loneliness:
  - Encourage spending time with friends: Video calls, phone calls, texting, or online games. Continue previewing your child's games and monitoring online activities.
  - Provide reassurance: Regularly check how he or she is doing. Spend more time together and come up with family activities that you all enjoy.
  - Stay in touch: set up calls or video chats with extended family or other people important to the child.

## COPING WITH ISOLATION/LONELINESS CONT.

- Strategies to deal with loneliness (cont.):
  - Talk about feelings: Your child might be sad about missing an important social event: birthday party, quinceanera, graduation. Acknowledge loss, talk about his or her feelings, and validate them by showing you understand.
  - Seek daily purpose: chores, reading, biking, creating music, creating movies, baking, dressing up, drawing, gardening, or building something.
  - Adopt a pet

# COPING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

- The COVID pandemic has caused job loss to millions of people around the WORLD. This has caused an increase in stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.
- If the COVID pandemic has left you unemployed you may feel the following emotions and troubling thoughts:
  - A loss of identity and sense of purpose
  - Unappreciated, you may no longer feel essential
  - Angry, scared
  - Lost, as if you don't know what to do next
  - Worried about how you will take care of yourself and your family

## COPING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT CONT.

- Strategies/steps to coping with emotional effects:
  - Accept your feelings: Its okay to feel anger, sadness, etc.
  - Acknowledge your grief (stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, withdrawal, and acceptance)
  - Maintain perspective: COVID is a worldwide pandemic
  - Seek out resources: community resources
  - Use your energy wisely: avoid being hard on yourself or focusing on your losses.
  - Focus on the present: Focus on what you have control over at this moment, rather than on concerns over your future. You can't control what happens but you can control how you respond.

## COPING WITH SUICIDE RISK

- The impact of the COVID pandemic on the suicide rate is not yet known but clearly it has added intense emotional and mental stress to people around the WORLD.
  - Suicidal thoughts are usually the result of feeling like you can't cope or recover when you are faced with what seems to be an overwhelming like situation.
  - Individuals with existing mental health conditions, such as severe anxiety and major depression, may actually see their condition worsen.
  - Fear, anxiety, and depression can result from a wide range of experiences and concerns. They can be a result of personal and family issues or work-related stress.



# COPING WITH SUICIDE CONT.

- Personal and family:
  - Fear that you or a loved one will contract COVID
  - No chance to be with a loved one who is seriously ill or dying
  - Grief over the loss of a loved one
  - Social isolation
  - Being in close quarters with family under stay at-home orders: Increase risk of spouse, partner, or child abuse.
  - Start or worsen alcohol or drug use
  - Having mental health disorders

# COPING WITH SUICIDE CONT.

- **Work-related concerns:**
  - Anxiety due to working in a high-risk environment
  - Feeling overwhelmed working in crowded health care facilities that treat people with COVID
  - Feeling burned out or frustrated as a health care worker
  - Fear and anxiety about increased risk of COVID-19: Essential workers in food or transportation industry
  - Worrying about loss of job or business
  - Worrying about providing basic needs for self and family.

# SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

- Talking about suicide
- Buying a gun or stockpiling pills
- Withdrawing
  - Not responding to communication from others, such as calls or text or other messages
- Having emotional mood swings
- Preoccupied with death, dying or violence
- Feeling trapped or hopeless
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs

# SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS CONT.

- Changing your normal routine: sleeping and eating patterns
- Risky and self-destructive behavior
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there is no need to
- Saying goodbye as if they won't be seen again
- Developing personality changes

# SUICIDE PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

- If you or someone you know is or may become depressed or suicidal, you can take the following action:
  - Check in on a regular basis
  - Offer help with basic needs
  - Indicate the importance of daily routines
  - Encourage physical activity
  - Encourage mental activity
  - Limit time watching the news
  - Learn warning signs of suicide

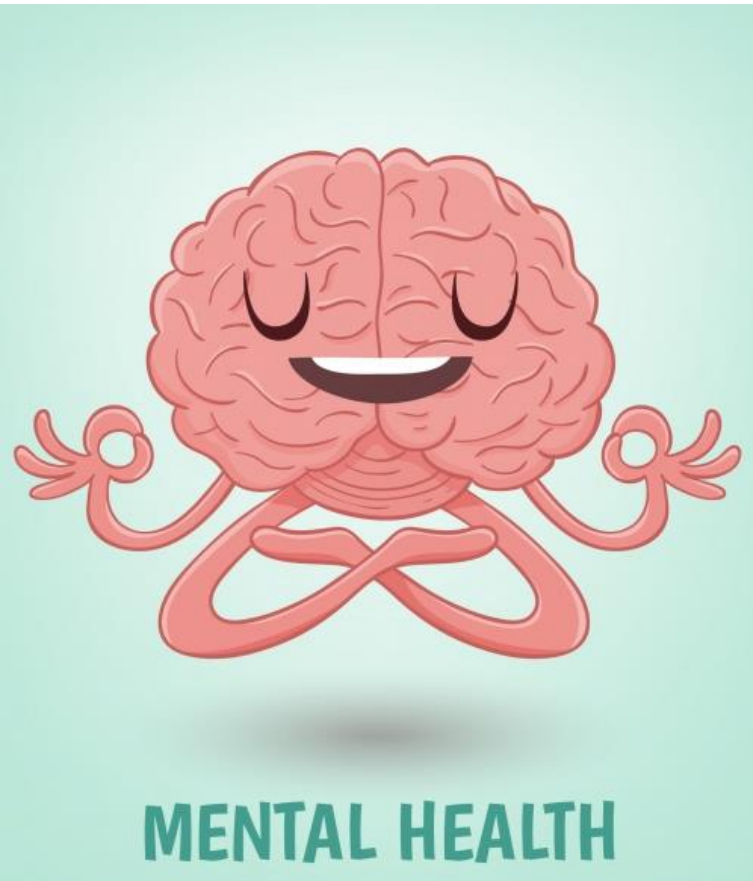
# IMMEDIATE HELP

- Immediate help is available: If you or a loved one are thinking about or have attempted suicide, you can help by taking one of the following actions:
  - Contact your doctor or mental health professional
  - Call a mental health crisis number or suicide hotline:
    - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
    - Veterans Crisis hotline
    - Lifeline Chat
  - Call 911 or your local emergency number
  - Reach out to a close friend or loved one
  - Contact a community spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE DURING COVID

- Stress, isolation and limited access to resources are fueling rising rates of substance abuse and overdoses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- While coronavirus has been the focus of so much attention this year, the opioid crisis has continued unabated and has even worsened.
  - More than 40 states have reported increases in opioid related deaths, according to the American Medical Association.
- People with substance abuse issues are likely to have dire outcomes if they contract COVID.
  - Substance abuse can harm lung function and weaken the immune system, which can increase the risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

# SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR ALL



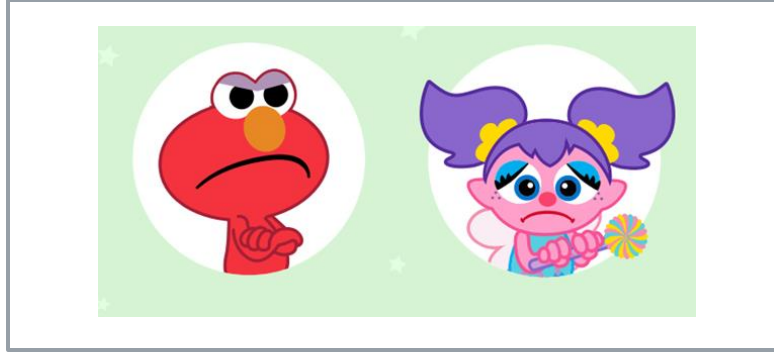
- **Take care of your body:**
  - Get enough sleep
  - Participate in regular activity
  - Eat healthy
  - Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and drugs
  - Limit screen time
  - Relax and recharge



## SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR ALL CONT.

- **Take care of your mind:**
  - Keep your regular routine: bedtime, meals, bathing, getting dressed, exercise
  - Limit exposure to news media: constant news about COVID can heighten fears
  - Stay busy: hobbies, projects
  - Focus on positive thoughts: things you are thankful for
  - Use your moral compass or spiritual life for support: can bring you comfort during difficult times
  - Get help when you need it

# HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR KIDS WITH THEIR EMOTIONS?



- Parents can:
  - Model effective strategies for coping with emotions
  - Be an emotion coach by talking with children about their emotions and teaching them how to label their feelings, respond to them, and express them appropriately

## HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR KIDS WITH THEIR EMOTIONS? CONT.



- Six-Step Process for Emotion-Coaching:
  1. Calm yourself first.
  2. Connect and Create Safety.
  3. Empathize.
  4. Double-check to be sure your child feels understood by what you've said.
  5. Deepen the conversation.
  6. Problem solve.

# HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND / REGULATE EMOTIONS



- Children can have lots of different feelings when something difficult or unexpected happens. Being able to recognize and name feelings is the very first step in helping children manage their feelings. These activities can help children understand their feelings and appropriately express their emotions.
- Feeling Faces Chart
  - The feelings chart shows faces in different states of emotion. During difficult moments, it can help children explain — and their parents understand — just how they feel when they can't find the words.
- Draw Your Feelings - <https://pbskids.org/arthur/health/resilience/draw-your-feelings.html>
  - Drawing pictures is one way children can help in feeling better. Have your child draw a picture that shows how they are feeling today.

## UNDERSTAND / REGULATE EMOTIONS (CONT.)



- Create Your Own Feeling Words Book
  - Help your child label and understand different feelings. You can go through the book together and think of stories for each emotion word.
- Use Emojis With Kids to Express Feelings
- ‘Guess the Feeling’ Game - <https://pbskids.org/daniel/games/guess-the-feel>
  - This game gives children a chance to play about what different feelings look like. And it can give you the chance to talk with your child about all kinds of different feelings.

## UNDERSTAND / REGULATE EMOTIONS CONT.



- How do you talk with your children about managing their feelings? These activities encourages children to find other ways to deal with feelings like anger and frustration.
  - Make a Healthy “Feelings Faces” Snack
    - Using words to describe feelings can help give your child power over his emotions, making them less overwhelming or scary. And talking about feelings with a caring listener helps children understand that feelings are normal— and that others have felt that way, too.
  - Bake “Get Out the Mad” Cookies
    - Talk about this activity with your child when she is feeling calm. Ask your child what some common feelings are. When was the last time they remember feeling happy? Sad? Angry? Explain that there are things they can do when their angry besides shouting or hitting – things that don’t hurt anyone or anything – like pounding on clay or play dough. When you do this activity together your child can pound on cookie dough.



# UNDERSTAND / REGULATE EMOTIONS CONT.



- Make a Mindfulness Jar / Calming Timeout Timer
  - When things become overwhelming for your child, grab this mindfulness jar to help them relax.
  - Materials:
    - Water bottle
    - Clear gel glue
    - Super glue
    - Glitter
    - Hot water
  - Directions:
    1. Remove the label from the water bottle.
    2. Fill the bottle about 3/4 with hot water. Then add a bottle of glitter glue and a small tube of glitter.
    3. Screw on the cap and play with the mixture until it takes about five minutes for the glitter to settle at the bottom of the bottle. Add more clear gel glue to make it go slower or more water to make it settle faster.
    4. Super glue the cap onto the water bottle so it can't come off in your child's hands.

---

# SELF-CARE TECHNIQUES

- 
- The following are techniques and general lifestyle changes that can help cope and manage symptoms of several mental health problems.
    - Stay aware of your mental health
      - Spot early warning signs – keep a mood diary
      - Build self-esteem
    - Nourish your social life
      - Connect with others
    - Try peer support
    - Make time for therapeutic activities
      - Relaxation techniques
      - Mindfulness therapy or Meditation
      - Spend time in nature



---

# SELF-CARE TECHNIQUES CONT.

- 
- Find ways to learn and be creative & get some tech-free time - to help focus mind and stop concentrating on negative thoughts.
    - Try drawing, playing a musical instrument or baking
    - Learn a new skill – can help boost your confidence
    - Craft activities
    - Online learning
    - Take a break from computer time

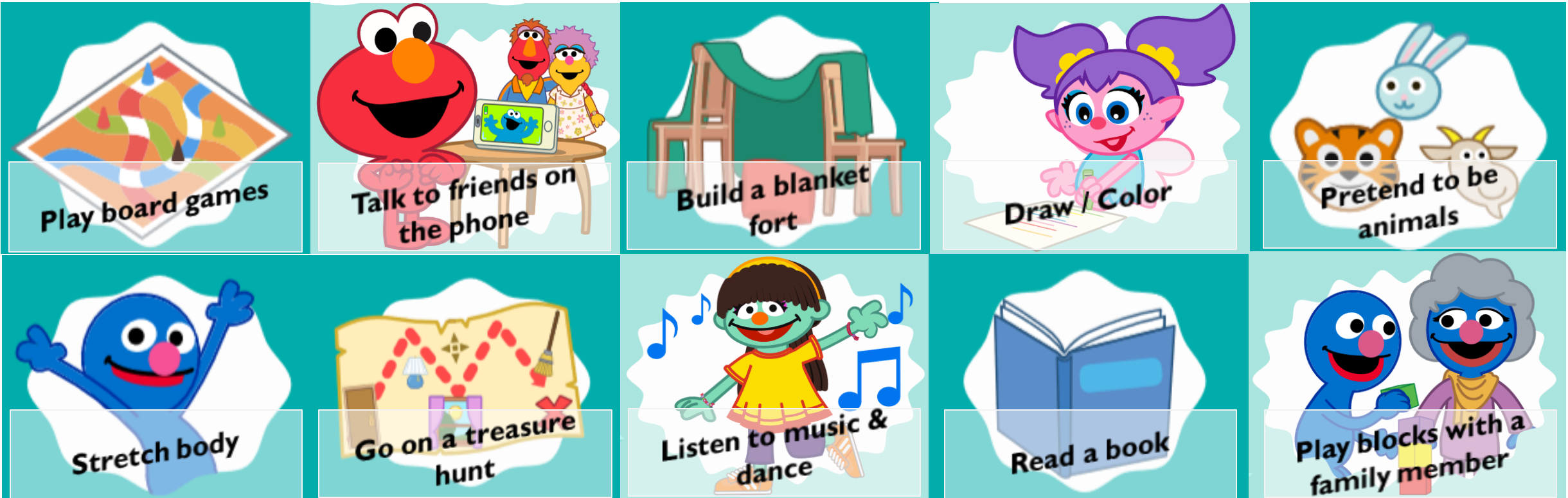
---

# SELF-CARE TECHNIQUES CONT.

- 
- Look after your physical health
    - Get enough sleep
    - Regular exercise
    - Healthy eating
    - Make time for personal care
  - Contact a specialist organization
  - **COVID-19 Mental & Behavioral Health Grief & Trauma Informed Virtual Support and Statewide Resources List**
    - [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid-19\\_mh\\_resources\\_4.3.20.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid-19_mh_resources_4.3.20.pdf)

# ACTIVITIES AT HOME

- Here are some playful activities the whole family can do to make the most of extra time together; to help take care of your child's mental health; or, help children manage feelings.



# SOOTHING / CALMING ACTIVITIES

These soothing or calming activities are an easy way to calm your child at the end of a school day or after a busy weekend of activities.

Mindfulness or  
meditation

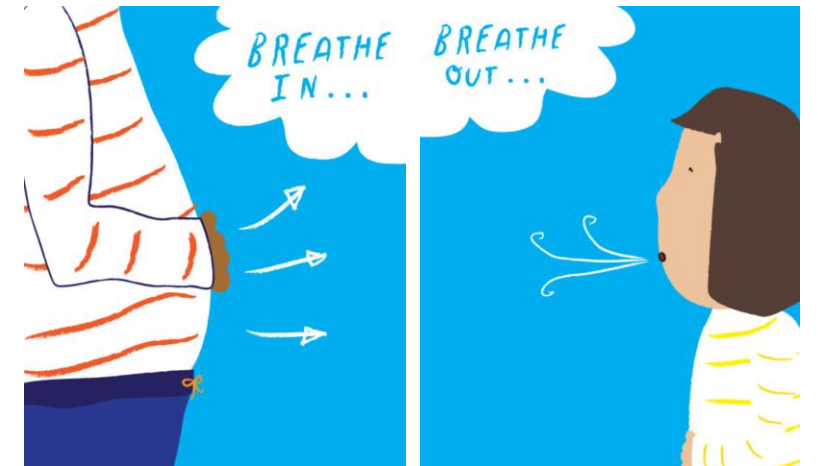
Deep breathing or  
blow bubbles

Yoga

Sing or dance

Identify  
letters/numbers  
with fingertip or  
Massage

Read, color or  
paint



Alo Yoga - Free, 5-minute yoga & meditation videos for  
kids. Watch on <https://www.alogives.com>

# RESOURCES

- NASP
  - <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>
- Donna Community resources (FOOD, BILLS, HOTLINE \*suicide, CPS, substance abuse\*) Assistance.
  - <https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/cgi-bin/id/city.cgi?city=Donna&state=TX>
  - <https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/cgi-bin/id/cityfoodbanks.cgi?city=Donna&state=TX>
  - <http://suicidehotlines.com/texas.html>
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  - <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

# RESOURCES

- Hidalgo County Resources
  - <https://www.hidalgocounty.us/1805/Immunization-Program>
  - <https://www.foodbankrgv.com/get-food-assistance/>
  - <https://www.hidalgocounty.us/2855/Emergency-Mortgage-Rental-Asst-Programs>
- Region One
  - <https://www.escl.net/covid19>
  - <https://www.escl.net/Page/5705>
- TEA Resources:
  - <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/covid/coronavirus-covid-19-support-and-guidance>
  - [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid-19\\_mh\\_resources\\_4.3.20.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid-19_mh_resources_4.3.20.pdf)
  - **TEA SUPPLEMENTAL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (SSES)**
    - APPLICATION WINDOW: **JANUARY 11 - JUNE 30, 2021**
    - <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/supplemental-special-education-services-sses>

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

**DONNA ISD**

SPECIAL EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT

(956) 461-4202