

Social Emotional Learning: Supporting Children During Uncertain Times

Empowered Responses: Reassurance, Routines, and Connections

These are unprecedented times. Our nation is currently experiencing multiple extraordinary events – global pandemic, economic crisis and response to racism. As a result, our children may be feeling some anxiety about the current challenges. Children may respond differently to these feelings depending on their age. Below are some possible reactions and ways you can help:

Age	Possible Responses	What You Can Do?
<p>Preschool</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being alone, nightmares • Loss of previously acquired speech skills • Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting • Change in appetite • Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging • Sleep pattern changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make yourself available to provide extra attention as needed. • Remain calm and reassure your child that they are safe. Approach any behavior change with compassion and acceptance. • Set gentle but firm limits. • Allow your child to express their emotions through language, art, etc. • Help your child with emotional self-regulation by engaging them in simple breathing exercises. • Prevent access to unsettling news and media. • Create time for calming activities before bedtime such as reading, playing soft music or storytelling. • Maintain regular routines as much as possible and establish new ones as needed.
<p>School Age (Ages 5-12)</p>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Physical symptoms (headaches, stomach aches, etc.) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parents' attention • Problems with attention and concentration • Increased statements of worry or fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain calm and reassuring. Approach any behavior change with compassion and acceptance. • Set gentle but firm limits. • Make yourself available to provide extra attention as needed. • Take time to talk and listen. Follow your child's lead and need for information. Provide facts that are age appropriate. Help name their emotions and validate them. • Encourage expression of emotions through games, drawing, storytelling, etc. • Engage your child in games or other interesting activities for fun. • Find ways for your child to safely stay in touch with friends/family through virtual means. • Support your child in engaging in educational activities. • Engage your child in projects that might help others. • Help your child with emotional self-regulation by engaging them in activities such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, regular physical activity and yoga. • Monitor and limit television viewing/social media. Talk about what they have seen/heard. • Have conversations about any stigma or discrimination that your child is exposed to in order to clarify misinformation. • Help your child engage in structured household chores. • Maintain regular routines as much as possible and establish new ones as needed. • Review and model hygiene practices for protection such as washing hands and wearing masks.

Age	Possible Responses	What You Can Do?
<p>Adolescent</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Agitation or decrease in energy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones • Problems with attention and concentration • Increased statements of worry or fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain calm and reassuring. Approach any behavior change with compassion and acceptance. • Set gentle but firm limits. • Make yourself available to hang out and engage in games and physical activities. • Take time to talk and listen. Provide facts and appropriate websites as needed. Help name their emotions and validate them. • Encourage your child to talk to friends and other trusted adults about their feelings. • Encourage your child to stay in touch with family/friends through virtual means. • Support your child in engaging in educational activities. • Engage your child in projects that might help others. • Encourage emotional self-regulation through activities such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, regular physical activity and yoga. • Monitor television viewing/social media. Talk about what they have seen/heard. • Have conversations about any stigma or discrimination that your child is exposed to in order to clarify misinformation. • Involve your child in household chores, supporting younger siblings and problem solving and planning strategies to support and protect the family. • Encourage continuation of routines as much as possible and/or help establish new ones. • Review and model hygiene practices for protection such as washing hands and wearing masks.

Additional Resources:

- **Supporting Children During Coronavirus (COVID19):**
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/supporting-children-during-coronavirus-covid19>
- **Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19:**
<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>
- **Talking to Kids About Race:**
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/in-the-news/talking-about-race/#close>



Adapted from: Age-Related Reactions to Traumatic Events by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, SEAD: Helping Children Cope During COVID-19 by the San Angelo Independent School District (SAISD), Supporting Children During Coronavirus by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Talking to Children About COVID-19 by the National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Nurses