



Managing Stress and Finding Balance During the Coronavirus Crisis

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Child Mind Institute: Our Work

Research



We are at the forefront of neuroscience efforts to find objective biological measures of mental illness that will lead to earlier diagnosis, more individualized treatment methods, and new and better interventions.

Clinical Care



We provide world-class clinical care to children struggling with mental health and learning disorders. We have helped thousands of children get the help they need in our offices and in their communities.

Public Education



We equip millions of parents, educators and policymakers with the information they need to end the stigma and misinformation that cause so many children to miss out on life-changing treatment.



Coping During COVID-19: Resources for Parents

childmind.org/coronavirus

Outline

The Shifting Landscape of Parenting during the COVID-19 Crisis

Skills for Stress Management During a Pandemic

Using Therapeutic Techniques to Cope for You and Your Child

First of All-You're Already Doing a Lot!



- You are:
 - Taking care of your family
 - Supporting your kids' online learning and summer plans
 - Managing your own emotions
 - Helping your kids manage theirs
 - Maybe continuing to work-in person or at home
 - Maybe taking care of sick family members
 - Dealing with changes to income, job status, finances

It's Normal to Feel Anxious Now



◆ Factors that contribute to anxiety

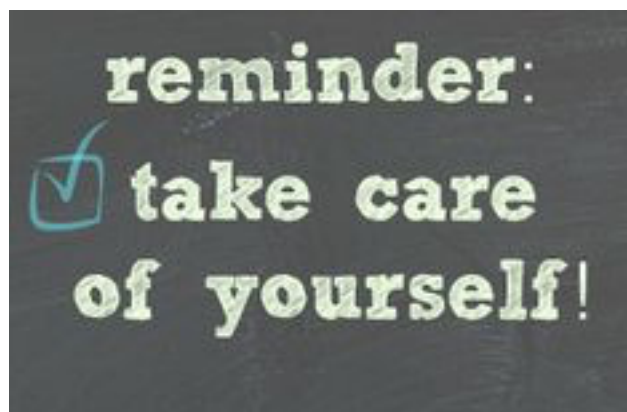
- ▶ Overexposure to the news, especially doomsday/apocalyptic stories
- ▶ Life feels very different and little seems constant
- ▶ Uncertainty: *When will this end? Who will get infected? What will school look like in the fall? Etc.*



Skills for Stress Management

Self Care: It's Not Just an Afterthought!

- Airplane analogy: Put on your own oxygen mask first
- Schedule self care
- Assess barriers to self care and plan around them
- Know when you need help for yourself



The COVID-19 Mental Health Check-In

□ Basic Wellness Practices

- Social Distancing/Hygiene/Health
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Eating
- Limiting News Exposure
- Structure in Schedule
- Positive (and Safe) Social Contact
- Face-to-Face Quality Time with Family
- Mood Monitoring and Behavioral Activation
- Riding the Wave (Acceptance)

Kids Experience Stress Even Under Typical Circumstances



School

- Homework
- Managing schedules
- Organization
- Teachers

Social

- Negotiating friendships
- Managing social activities

Family

- Limits
- Expectations
- Conflict
- Multiple relationships

Balance

- How to make it all work
- Time management

+ COVID-19

- Disrupted schedule and routines
- Normal activities canceled
- Separation from peers
- Lots of time with family
- Worry about illness
- Uncertainty

Psychological First Aid



- Do only what's needed
- Focus on concrete needs first
 - food, safety, healthcare, technology, etc...
- Normalize feelings of sadness, frustration and anger
- Problem-solve the things that are hardest right now
- Ask kids how they are doing and what questions they have
- Ask kids again how they are and what questions they have

What is Helpful Right Now?

- How adults respond can help kids cope:
 - Age appropriate information, comfort, and help
 - Routines and expectations maintained or re-established
 - Remain or appear calm
 - Focus on coping and resilience
 - Not only how hard this is, but also why we are doing it
 - Foster grit: consult don't answer, promote perseverance, celebrate successes and failures
 - Limit media exposure (younger kids)
 - Ask kids what they see and hear in the media and correct inaccurate information (older kids)

Re-Thinking Routines

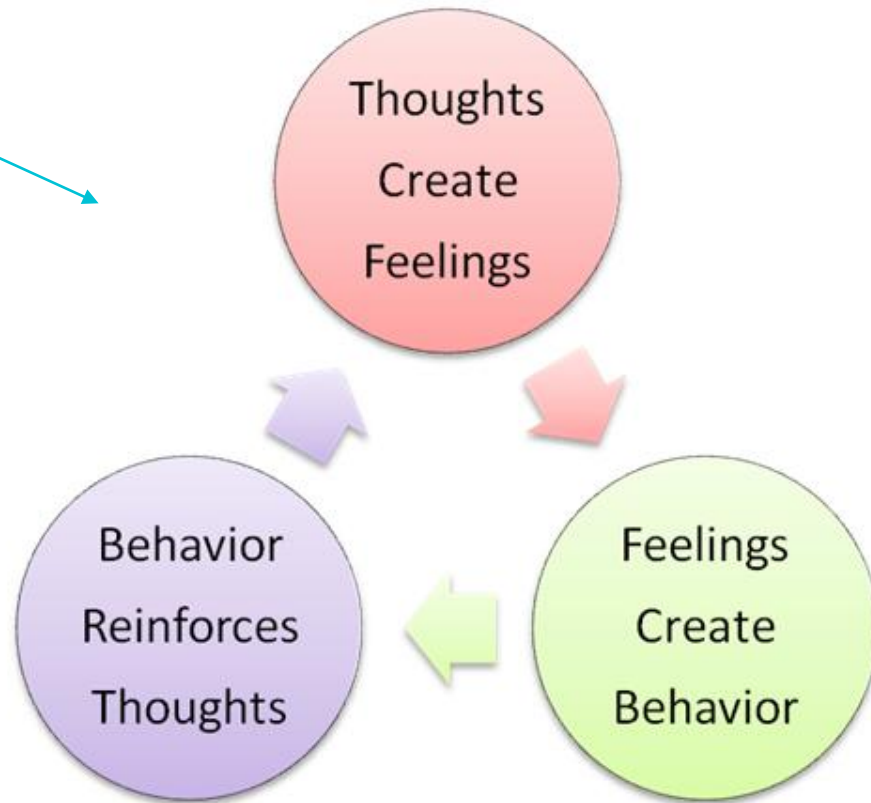
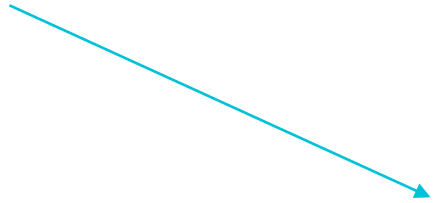


- Take the pressure off
 - Simple schedule or outline of the day with input from kids
 - No need for a color-coded schedule of constant activities
 - It's ok for kids to be bored
- Think about how you want kids to feel, rather than what you want them to do
 - Supported
 - Loved
 - Taken care of
- Focus on what you can control
 - Mealtimes?
 - Fun time- movie, games, outside exercise?
 - Bedtime routine?
- Reach out to others
 - Phone calls or video chats with friends and family members
- Keep the routine fresh
 - Small changes to keep it interesting

CBT: Thoughts-Feelings-Behaviors



Event: COVID-19





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Coping: Thoughts



Thinking About Thinking

- Our thoughts are not facts
- Our thoughts are automatic
 - We generate them quickly and don't question them
- In moments of stress, when emotions are running high, our thoughts can get the better of us
 - Negative
 - Self-critical
 - Unrealistic




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into a thinking trap

### 7 Common Thinking Traps

- Black and white thinking- *“If camp is cancelled, my summer is ruined”*
- Fortune telling- *“My high school junior isn’t going to get into college”*
- Ignoring the positive- *“Everything about this sucks”*
- Labeling- *“I’m a bad parent”*
- Taking things personally- *“My kid is struggling, I am doing everything wrong”*
- Worst possible outcome- *“My kids’ futures are going to be ruined”*
- Mind reading- *“My kids hate me”*

# Realistic Thinking

- How to escape a thinking trap: realistic thoughts
  - Is there another way to look at this?
  - Is it realistic?
  - What's the best thing that could happen?
  - What's the worst thing that could happen?
    - What can I do?

## Positive Thinking



## Realistic Thinking



# Cognitive Restructuring



An example of a stressful thought pattern:

**Event:** School closure due to COVID-19

**Thought:** “I can’t manage the stress”, “I’m not doing a good job with my kids or my work”

**Feeling:** Worry, guilt, shame, frustration, disappointment

**Behavior:** Lashing out at loved ones, procrastinating work, disrupted sleep/eating

# Cognitive Restructuring



The situation remains the same, the thought does not:

Event: School closure due to COVID-19

Thought: "This is hard and we've never done anything like this before", "I will do the best I can"

Feelings: Encouragement, confidence, motivation

Behavior: More patience with self and family, more able to focus on work

# Coping Replacement Thoughts



- Self encouraging thought or mantra; more realistic or helpful thought
- A thought that re-inspires you and re-grounds you in your purpose

- 
- A large, light blue thought bubble with a dark blue outline, containing four bullet points. Below the main bubble are three smaller, overlapping light blue circles of varying sizes, also with dark blue outlines.
- “I am doing the best I can for my kids and family.”
  - “There is no such thing as a perfect parent.”
  - “My family loves me”
  - “Just take it one moment at a time.”



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## Coping: Emotions



# Understanding Emotions

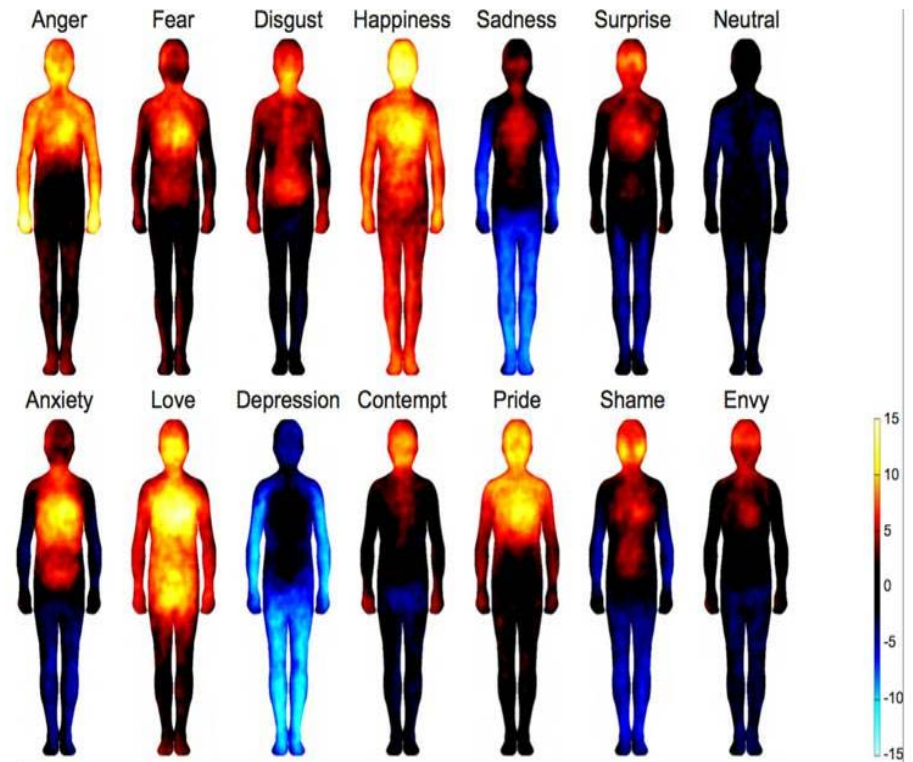


- Why do we have emotions?
  - They give us information about our environment
  - Help us understand ourselves and others
- Our emotions are like waves in the ocean
  - They wash in and wash out
  - Sometimes a really big one will wash over and it feels like we're drowning:
    - Will I lose control?
    - Will I feel like this forever?
    - Can I survive?
- The intense emotion will eventually go back out to sea and calm will return
  - What can we do while we wait for the storm to pass?



# Identifying Emotions

- We feel our emotions not only with our mind, but also with our bodies
- Learning to identify bodily sensations associated with emotions can help us identify what we are feeling
- When we can identify and name our emotions we feel more in control and more able to weather the storm





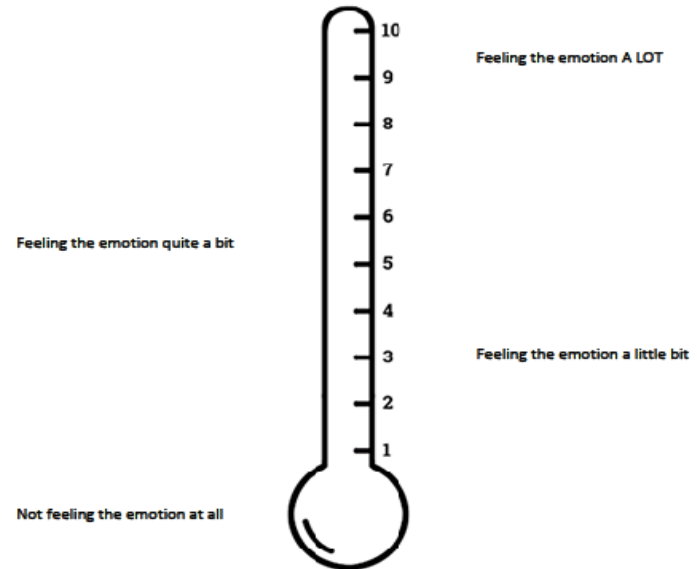
# Emotion Regulation

Take your temperature:

- What emotion am I experiencing?
- What is the intensity of the emotion?
- What can I do to bring my temperature down?

## Feeling Thermometer

What emotion am I feeling right now? \_\_\_\_\_



How much am I feeling the emotion? \_\_\_\_\_

# Stress Management

- To manage emotional and physiological responses to stress
- Mindfulness
  - Paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment, without judgment
- Evidence-based relaxation techniques
  - Deep breathing
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Guided imagery
- Distress tolerance
  - Activities to distract
  - Activities to bring about an opposite emotion
  - Focus on helping others



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## Coping: Behaviors



# The Importance of Behaviors



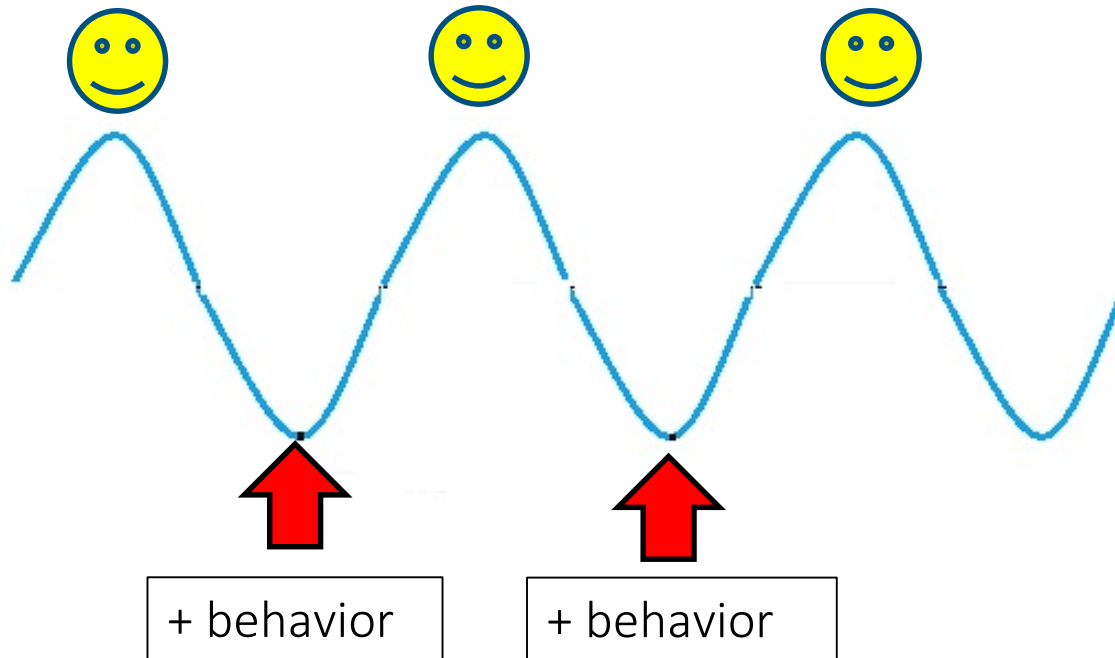
- Behavioral Activation
  - Using behaviors to activate productive thoughts and feelings
- Changing your actions as a way to promote emotional wellness
- “Fake it until you make it”
- Particularly helpful for those with depression who are having a hard time participating in daily life



# The Importance of Behaviors



- Positive behaviors lead to positive emotions
- Leads to a buoy effect throughout the day



# Helpful Behaviors



What are behaviors and activities that make you feel good?

## THE FIVE CATEGORIES:

- **Service Activities** - Doing something directly for others
- **Fun Activities** – Doing things you enjoy, either by yourself or with other people
- **Social Activities** – Spending time with other people
- **Mastery Activities** – Doing something to learn a skill, working towards mastery
- **Physical Activities** – Includes exercise, games, and sports

# So What Do I Do?



Make sure your behavioral goals are:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Realistic

Time-oriented

- Walk around the block
- Open the windows
- Get up and stretch once an hour
- Call, text, video chat with a friend
- Call a neighbor and see if they need help
- Listen to a favorite song and dance
- Watch a funny movie or show
- Clean the bathroom

# Final Coping Tips for Parents



- ◆ This is a new way of being in the world. Your brain has to reset
- ◆ Prioritize healthy choices
- ◆ Use the skills in this workshop to develop a mini stress management plan for yourself
- ◆ Reconnect with dormant or new activities/hobbies you enjoy
- ◆ Your schedule
  - ▶ Chunking Time (Days/Week)
  - ▶ Working, playing, prepping in shifts
  - ▶ Being present in the shift you're in
  - ▶ Boundaries are your friend
  - ▶ Radical self-Honesty on to-do lists
- ◆ Perfectionism and the coronavirus don't mix
- ◆ Breathe. This is a situation for which a perfect solution is impossible
- ◆ Acceptance and mindfulness
- ◆ Practice forgiveness and self-compassion





Thank You!