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ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

Resource roundup: Help parents cope with pandemic uncertainty

Schools will open this fall, but the pandemic is still here — along with the mask and vaccine debate, fatigue, mistrust, fear, uncertainty and possibly chaos as we tackle the next challenge: the Delta variant.

Although most restrictions have been lifted — for now — and we are returning to “normal,” it is still a difficult time. Consider helping your parents navigate the current pandemic messages, warnings and rules by including coping tips in your back-to-school materials. Add some helpful, positive messages to your school newsletter, principal’s back-to-school message, parent hand-outs, social media posts and website messages.

Get started with these recommendations from Chris Moore, Social-Emotional Learning & Behavioral Health Coordinator for Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Ore.

Go easy on yourself

If there’s one thing families should keep in mind, it’s this: Go easy on yourself! Forget being perfect. None of us is perfect, especially during a global health crisis.

Strengthen your emotional skills. The pandemic forced us back to basics, so focus on relationship-building and self-compassion. Growth and learning start with social and emotional strength. For example, if you’re struggling as a parent, it’s OK for your kids to see that, but let them see how you navigate it in appropriate ways rather than just having an outburst. They’re getting life lessons on managing a crisis. That means they’re getting tools to be resilient. When you feel like you want to scream, breathe. Then breathe some more, Moore said. Give yourself time to calm your brain; go from raw emotions to reasoning.

Practices he suggests to boost resilience and capacity:

- Get on a regular sleep cycle.
- Move your body daily.
- Connect with people who care about you.
- Take scheduled breaks from screen time.
- Get outside.
- Try a free, evidence-based self-care app, such as the SuperBetter website (www.superbetter.com) or Mindshift CBT or MindDoc apps.
- Ask for help and let people help you. You’re not alone.
- Offer the same kindness to yourself that you would to someone you care about.
- Be mindful and accepting of how you’re feeling in the moment without judgment.
- Recognize our shared humanity and reality that sometimes being human is just really hard.

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For content questions, contact: Marcia Latta Communications Consultant (503) 580-2612.

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More practical suggestions on talking to kids, based on ages:

The simple advice is: Be firm. Be kind. Be flexible. Find specific tips in this list of guidelines for parent-child communications from the Child Development Institute. <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/communication/#gs.7ovlax>

Some of the basic principles of good parent-child communication include:

- Show interest and offer help.
- Turn off the TV, avoid calls when your child wants to talk.
- Keep conversations private and avoid embarrassing your child in front of others.
- Physically get down to your child's level to talk.
- If you are angry about a behavior, regain your cool before you communicate so you can be objective.
- Listen carefully and don't interrupt. Be courteous. Don't ever put your child down with name-calling or insults.
- For specific incidents, if you have knowledge of a situation, confront your child with the information you know about.
- Show your child that you accept them, regardless of what they have done.

Recommended resources for more information

Books for adults:

- "Thrivers" by Michele Borba
- "The Whole Brain Child" by Dan Siegel & Tina Bryson
- "Brainstorm" by Dan Siegel
- "How to Talk so Kids Will Listen (& Listen so Kids Will Talk) by Faber & Mazlish
- "Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents" by Wilson & Lyons

Books for kids:

- "What to Do When You Worry Too Much — A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety" by Dawn Huebner
- "Ruby Finds a Worry" by Tom Percival
- "Change Your Brain, Change Your Life (Before 25)" by Jesse Payne

Websites:

- **Child Mind Institute:** <https://childmind.org/>
- **Greater Good Magazine:** <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>
- **Anxiety Canada:** www.anxietycanada.com/articles/parent-child

Free Apps:

- **MindShift CBT:** www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/
- **SuperBetter:** www.superbetter.com
- **MyLife:** <https://my.life>
- **Stop, Breathe & Think Kids:** Focus, Calm & Sleep: www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/stop-breathe-think-kids-focus-calm-sleep
- **MoodMission:** <https://moodmission.com>
- **Happify:** <https://my.happify.com>