



Supporting Your Child's Social Emotional Wellness during COVID-19

PARENT SUPPORT WEBINAR

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**Bella Mente
Academies**

“Resilience is accepting your new reality even if it’s less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you’ve lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that’s good.”

- ELIZABETH EDWARDS

Youth Mental Health and Well Being

Learning Objectives:

Recognizing signs and symptoms of distress in your child

Risk factors

Protective factors

Helpful strategies to address your child's need

Coping with uncertainty during the public health crises

Resources available to support families

Signs and Symptoms of Social Emotional Distress

Expressing feelings and emotions: your child will demonstrate their distress in the way that they know how

Verbal: screaming, shouting, whining, crying

Non-verbal:

- Physical aggressions (kicking, hitting, biting, pushing)
- Withdrawal or internalizing (refusing to discuss or share feelings and emotions, concealing sadness with overly cheerful demeanor, becoming dismissive, appears blithely unaware of what is going on in their environment).
- Obsessive or compulsive behaviors.
- Changes in moods (irritability, anger, impatience)
- Sleep disturbance (too little or too much)
- Changes in eating patterns.
- Increased attachment to parents or caretakers (example: worries and fears of being separated from parents).
- Somatic symptoms (sudden or unexplained illness such as headaches or stomach pains).

Risk Factors

Worries or fears of safety: self and loved ones (parents' or guardians occupations)

Worries or fears of security about the basic needs (foods and shelter – related to parents or guardians' financial or jobs security).

Sense of isolation: don't know how to connect with others, particularly same-age peers.

Family discord: with parents, with siblings, between parents, between siblings.

Parents' ability to cope with circumstances: modeling behaviors to cope with distress.

History of anxiety and depression

History of alcohol and drug abuse

Protective Factors

Cohesive parenting style:

- Parents are unified and consistent about rules, routines, and organization.
- Modeling and teaching positive communications: it's okay to disagree but need to model how to compromise.
- Include your child in decision-making: participating in making family rules, giving them choices rather than demands.

Sense of belonging: part of a group or community through interests, faith-based, circle of friends or extended family

Feeling connected: peers, relatives, siblings, school (attending classes).

Activities

- Physical activities: outdoor or indoor activities
- Hobbies or Interests: crafts, journaling, buildings, taking care of animals.

Strategies to support your child

➤ Talking to you child: Listen Nonjudgmentally

- Talk to your child about how they feel and listen carefully to what they say.
- Validate their feelings and emotions (examples: “I can see that you are feeling very angry.” “I know that this might feel scary.”).
- Do not express negative judgement.
- Be aware of your body language and facial expressions (sit next to them instead of across from them, relaxed posture and facial expressions).
- Allow silences, be patient, do not interrupt.
- Express how glad you are that they are willing to share their feelings with you.

Strategies

- Provide a consistent and safe environment: establish routines
- Rules and expectations are discussed.
- Consequences are explained.
- Follow through:
 - with rules and expectations
 - with routines
 - with promises (don't make promises you can't keep)

Strategies

➤ Modeling healthy practices:

- Physical health
- Emotional wellness: self-esteem, resiliency (problem-solving, positive thinking, adapting to changes)
- Eating habits

Strategies

Regular school attendance and academic performance:

- parents play an important role in a child education by setting the expectations for attendance and academic success.

Stay connected:

- Family and friends
- Faith-based community
- Interest-based community
- Community bonding (example: volunteering, helping neighbors)

Strategies

High monitoring of your child's activity:

- Monitor online activities on phones or other electronic devices: social media, computer games, streaming.

Focus on positive behaviors

Praise: verbal, gestural, facial

“I like how you.....”

“I notice that you.....”

Strategies

1. Patience: you will need it in abundance.
2. Understanding: allow your child to be the best of her/himself.
3. Love: love and accept your child for who they are.
4. Courage: have the courage to continue supporting your child.
5. Don't give up: your child needs your continued support to navigate this difficult time.
6. Be kind to yourselves: take the time for self-care.

Coping with uncertainty

Create a safe physical and emotional environment for your child: the 3 Rs

REASSURANCE: re-assure and re-affirm your child about his/her safety and the safety of loved ones. Convey and confirm the sense of security and safety, tell them that it's adults' job to ensure their safety.

ROUTINES: parents should maintain routines to provide their child with a sense of predictability (examples: regular bedtimes and meals, daily schedule, differentiate school days and weekend routines, maintain similar routines as if your child is attending school in-person).

REGULATION: support your child's development of self-regulation to manage their feelings and emotions (examples: deep breathing, asking for a break, movement breaks, taking a break in a quiet corner to read, draw, or write).

Resources

- **Bella Mente Academies website and link to counseling referral:**

<https://bellamentecharter.org/social-emotional-and-behavioral-support-resources/>

- **Eka Zoss, School Psychologist**

ezoss@bellamentecharter.org

- **School Psychologist Virtual Office Hours for Students:**

Monday – Friday at 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Link to meeting is posted on teachers' Google Classroom.

Resources

➤ San Diego County Office of Education

<https://www.sdcoe.net/student-services/student-support/Pages/mental-health.aspx>

❖ <https://mhanational.org/infographic-youth-mental-health-emotions-matter>

❖ <https://mhanational.org/talking-adolescents-and-teens-starting-conversation>

❖ <https://up2sd.org/resources/parents/>



*Success is not final;
failure is not fatal.
It is the
Courage to Continue
that counts.*

- Winston S. Churchill

References

Youth Mental Health First Aid USA, 2016

National Association of School Psychologists

San Diego County Office of Education: Student Wellness and Positive School Climate

San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council, 2020.