

Hello parents,

RISE, Inc's Mental Health Team would like to take this opportunity to reach out to you and offer some information on how you can support your child/children during this confusing time in our world. Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and "acting out" behaviors in teens
- Poor academic attention/performance with newly implemented learning platforms
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many things you can do to support your child/children while they are home from school(s)

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the pandemic, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. With schools closed, create a schedule for school work/learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members by phone/FaceTime/Skype.

The common reactions to distress will fade over time for most children. Children who were directly exposed to a disaster can become upset again; behavior related to the event may return if they see or hear reminders of what happened. If children continue to be very upset or if their reactions hurt their schoolwork or relationships you may want to reach out to a professional who specializes in children's emotional needs. As an Associate Marriage & Family Therapist, I am one such professional who can offer help.

Lastly, the following tips can help reduce stress before, during, and after these precarious times:

Before

- Talk to your children so that they know you are prepared to keep them safe.
- Review safety plans for how your family will deal with quarantines. Having a plan will increase your children's confidence and help give them a sense of control.

During

- Stay calm and reassure your children.
- Talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand. Keep it simple and appropriate for each child's age.

After

- Provide children with opportunities to talk about what they went through or what they think about it. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
- It is difficult to predict how some children will respond to disasters and traumatic events. Because parents, teachers, and other adults see children in different situations, it is important for them to work together to share information about how each child is coping after a traumatic event.

Our mental health clinicians will continue to make themselves available to your child, and we can "meet" online using our Telehealth meeting app, which is our HIPAA protected Online Student Mental Health platform. Please reach out to us if you'd like for us to work together, and we will send you an Informed Consent that covers Telehealth.

Best Wishes