

# Supporting the Social Emotional Needs of Elementary Students During a Pandemic

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PERMISSION TO FEEL



*Too often we look for strategies to shift ourselves & our children out of negative emotion spaces. We're told to think positively or to be grateful. But that's not always possible. During difficult times, sometimes we just need to be there for one another.*

Marc Brackett

# Finding Calm: A Guided Meditation

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# Trends at the Elementary Schools During the Pandemic

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*Overcoming the challenges of the school year:*

- During hybrid model students experienced less “fun” parts of school - all vegetables and no dessert
- Switching between in-person learning and DL during quarantine
- Wearing masks all day
- Less social opportunities in school and after school
- Adjustment to being back at school for a full day

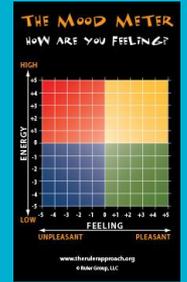
# Trends at the Elementary Schools During the Pandemic

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*Change has also brought an opportunity to build resilience:*

- Most students are resilient and will be fine
- Most students adjusted well to the full time model and are enjoying having more of the “fun” parts of the school day
- Some students did well with distance learning, thriving
- Self-regulation during hybrid model
- Building executive functioning skills during distance learning
- Planning own play dates

# Supporting Healthy Expression of Emotions and Feelings



- You can validate their emotions even if you don't agree with their behavior
- Discuss ways that work for your child to share their emotions:
  - Verbally, signal, visually, drawing/writing
  - Use the Mood Meter at home to identify and label emotions
- Ask, "how are you feeling about....?" and take time to listen when they choose to share their feeling
- Help them to recognize and understand their emotions: "I notice ... Are you feeling ... when ... ?"

# Starting the Conversation

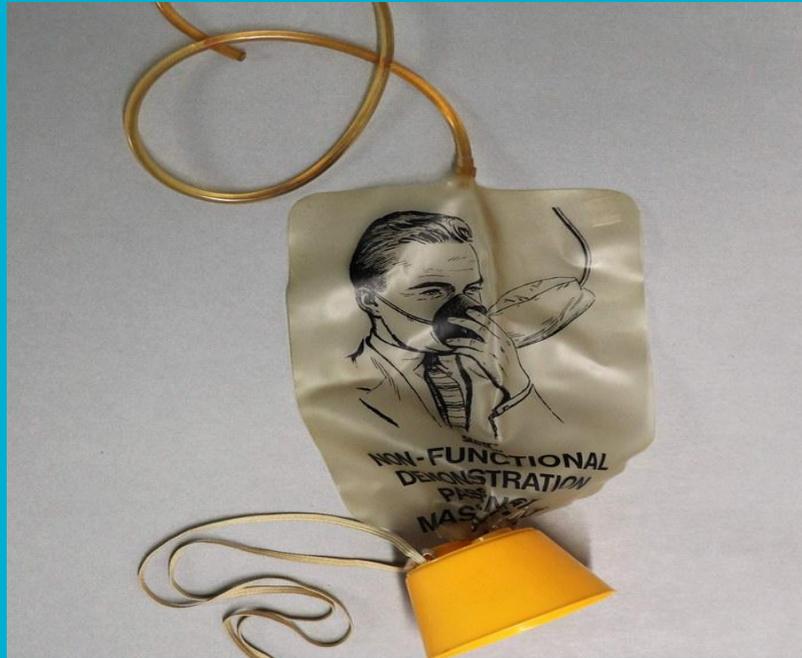
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*Lead with curiosity and ask open-ended yet specific questions:*

- When were you the happiest today?
- How did you help someone today? How did someone help you?
- What did you learn about today?
- What is something interesting or funny you heard about today?
- What was the most fun thing you did today?
- What are you most looking forward to tomorrow?
- What was the toughest part of your day today?
- Rose, Thorn, Bud
- What are you most grateful for today?

# Managing Your Own Stress During the Pandemic

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# Marc Brackett's Big 7

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1. Self-compassion/ Other compassion. Everyone is doing their best!
2. Self Care - exercise, nutrition, sleep. We know. You know.
3. Healthy Relationships - Make time for connections. Be your best self!
4. Manage your thoughts, practice gratitude. Everyday.
5. Manage your life- keep to routines, focus on what you can control, get rid of excess activities causing stress.
6. Participate in meaningful activities: Have fun, be in nature, laugh!
7. Breathe more. Breathe slowly. Breathe intentionally. Be Mindful! It works!

# Signs of Anxiety in Children

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More significant levels of anxiety may be present if your child demonstrates:

- Avoidance of specific activities, situations or people
- A tendency to worry about what can go wrong in any scenario
- Worries or fears that interfere with normal activity
- Persistent distress despite an adult's reassurance
- Trouble sleeping at night or insisting on sleeping with parents
- Frequent physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach pains, that do not stem from other medical conditions
- Repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected or intense fear that comes with symptoms like heart pounding, trouble breathing, or feeling shaky, sweaty or dizzy.

# Signs of Depression in Children

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- Unusual sadness or irritability, persisting even when circumstances change
- Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Reduced feelings of anticipation
- Changes in weight
- Shifts in sleep patterns
- Sluggishness
- Harsh self-assessment (“I’m ugly. I’m no good. I’ll never make friends.”)
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness

# How To Help Your Child At Home: Building Resilience

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- Making Connections
- Help your child by having them help others
- Maintain a daily routine
- Take a break
- Teach your child self-care
- Move toward your goals
- Nurture a positive self-view
- Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery
- Accept change

# How to Help Your Child at Home: Coping Toolbox

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- Take deep breaths
- Squeeze and relax your muscles
- Practice mindfulness
- Move your body - take a walk, stretch, jump, dance, practice a sport
- Play with a pet
- Take a warm bath
- Write about how you are feeling
- Draw, paint, or color
- Listen to calming music
- Read a book
- Talk to a family member or friend
- Use a calming jar

# Resources

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## Apps:

- Mood Meter
- Calm (Kids Section)
- Stop, Breathe, and Think Kids
- Smiling Mind

## Books:

- *Even Superheroes Have Bad Days* by Shelly Becker
- *I Can Do Hard Things: Mindful Affirmations for Kids* by Gabi Garcia
- *Bubble Gum Brain: Ready, Get Mindset ... GROW!!* by Julia Cook
- *Moody Cow Meditates* by Kerry MacLean
- *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Lauren Alderfer
- *Breathe Like Bear* by Kira Willey

# Let's Finish Strong!

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