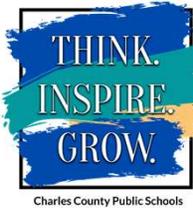


# Coping Strategies for Parents/Guardians

Sponsored by Charles County Public Schools'  
Department of Student Services

12/13/21



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## Presenters and Objectives

- **Malik J. Williams, M.Ed.**
    - School Counselor
    - Matthew Henson Middle School
  - **Maria “Maggie” O’Connor-Buckingham**
    - Spanish Interpreter
- In this workshop, you will learn about coping strategies from the viewpoint of your student.
  - This workshop is designed to help you connect with your student as they relate to their new skills.

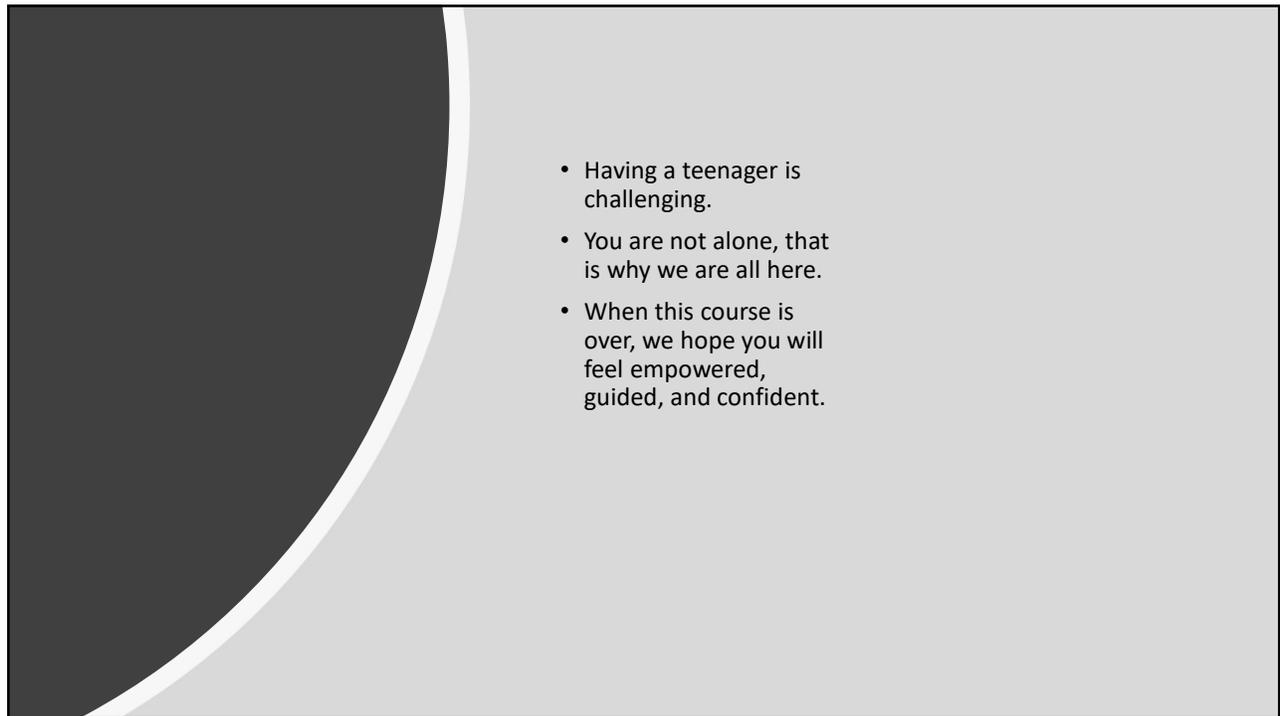
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## Welcome

- I am thrilled that you, the adult, is involved in learning more about your student.
- In this course, you will learn about coping strategies from the viewpoint of your teen or pre-teen.
- This course is designed to help you connect with your student as they find their way to improved coping strategies. We have designed this course to support you. We are proud of you for being here.

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- Having a teenager is challenging.
- You are not alone, that is why we are all here.
- When this course is over, we hope you will feel empowered, guided, and confident.

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- Everyone faces challenging situations.
- Everyone struggles to manage their emotions.

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## What is your definition of "coping strategies"?

- Most people use coping strategies...or they at least try to use them.

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## Our definition:

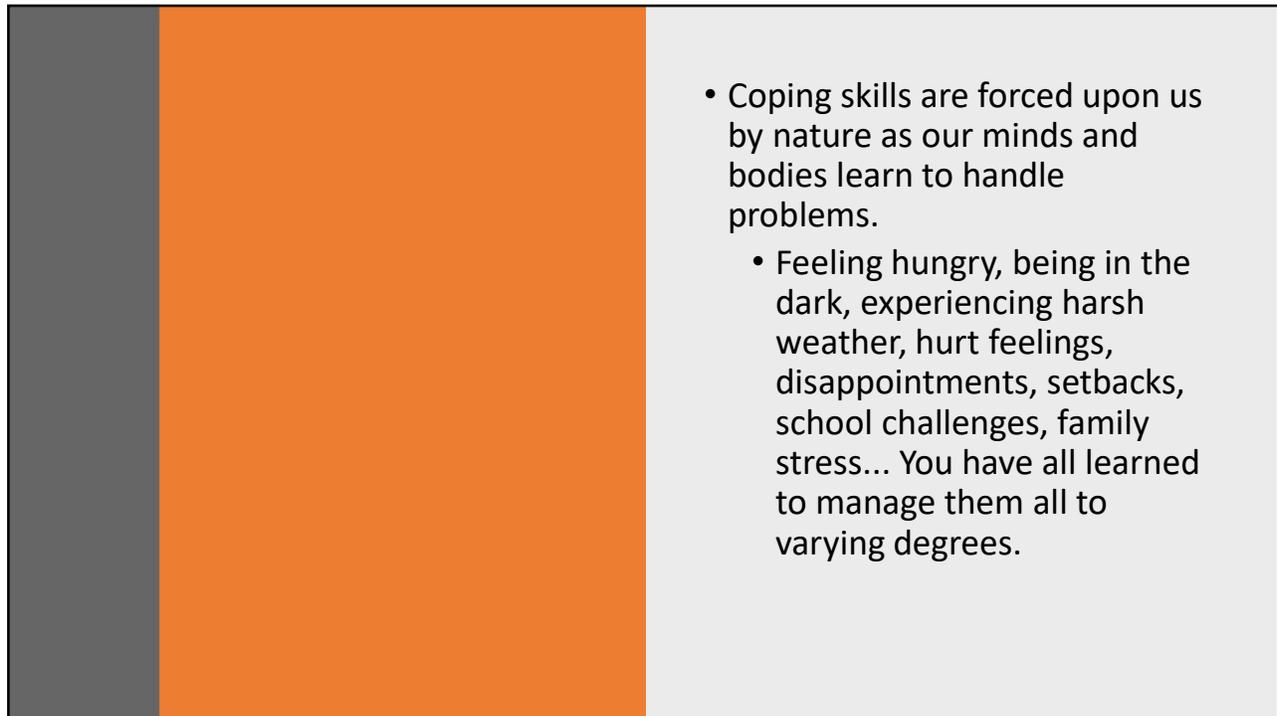
- Healthy ways to get yourself through difficult times.
  - Coping strategies can soothe you, calm you, and help you to support yourself.

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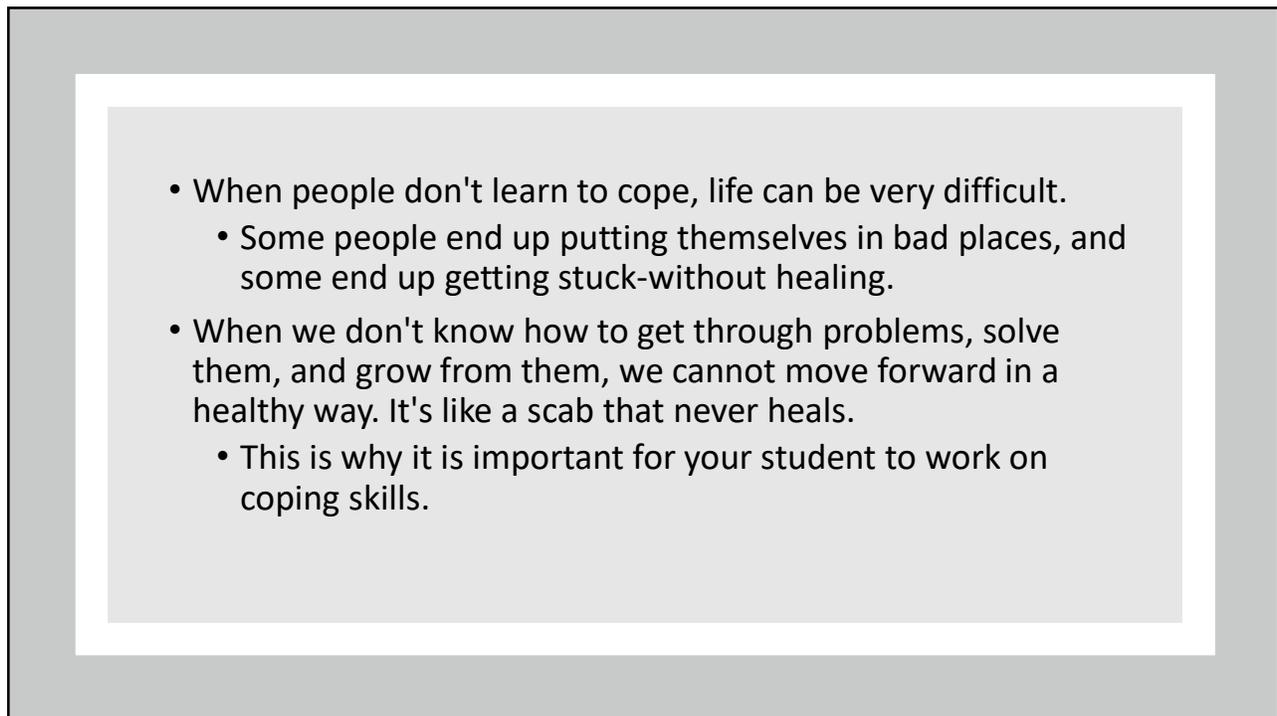
- Coping skills are **LEARNED**, and come with age and life experience.
- When we don't have coping strategies, we struggle-A LOT- to get through difficult times in life.

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- Coping skills are forced upon us by nature as our minds and bodies learn to handle problems.
  - Feeling hungry, being in the dark, experiencing harsh weather, hurt feelings, disappointments, setbacks, school challenges, family stress... You have all learned to manage them all to varying degrees.

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- When people don't learn to cope, life can be very difficult.
  - Some people end up putting themselves in bad places, and some end up getting stuck-without healing.
- When we don't know how to get through problems, solve them, and grow from them, we cannot move forward in a healthy way. It's like a scab that never heals.
  - This is why it is important for your student to work on coping skills.

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We MUST  
have coping  
skills to get  
through life

- We have to be able to manage difficult situations.
  - When we don't know how to manage ourselves, we end up making poor choices, get stressed easily, and we don't have the tools to manage even the easiest of problems.

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## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Skills

- Healthy Coping Skills
  - Practicing meditation
  - Taking time to yourself
  - Engaging in physical activity
  - Reading
  - Spending time with your friends
  - Finding humor
  - Engaging in your hobbies
  - Writing
  - Music
- Unhealthy Coping Skills
  - Romanticizing the past
  - Drinking
  - Using drugs
  - Overreacting to small issues
  - Worrying
  - Avoiding the issue
  - Running away from home/school
  - Excessive sleeping

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Do you feel like coping strategies are important? Why or why not?

- On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your own ability to get through tough times?
- On a scale of 1-10, how effective would you rate your coping skills?
- Do you believe your coping skills are mostly healthy or unhealthy?
  - Now consider these questions for when you were your student's age and you can use these as starting points for conversations with your student.

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Building strengths and Developing Tools...

- When a difficult situation presents itself, it can be tough to hang on and get through it in a healthy manner.
- **For example:**
  - Joe played basketball through his entire childhood, and then he tried out for the team in high school. After trying his best, he was cut from the team and told to try again the next year. He was upset but decided to practice even harder for a year to improve his chances.
- It was natural that Joe was upset and possibly even angry to be cut from the team, but it's Joe's response to the situation that made the difference between growing and crashing.
- Joe had a choice between healthy and unhealthy coping skills.
  - Healthy coping skills would help Joe feel better without doing something dangerous, destructive, hurtful, illegal, or just negative.

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## Healthy coping skills have several parts

- This begins with managing feelings, it is natural to feel a lot of emotions at once.
  - For example, Joe probably felt sad, mad, jealous, anxious, disappointed, fearful, and embarrassed.

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## Accept your feelings

- It is okay to have any feelings in hard or even unhappy situations.
- Feelings are nothing to be ashamed of and everyone has them.
  - Normalize and validate these feelings for your student.
- Joe had the right to feeling anything he wanted about the situation.
- The important piece was Joe understood his feelings and had a handle on what was happening.
- Understanding your feelings in these situations is so important because you can get stuck and never grow from your challenges.
- If Joe did not deal with his feelings, he could have made the situation worse.
- If Joe chose to express his feelings in an unhealthy way, he would either bottle them up or do something unhealthy to make things worse for himself.

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## Self-care

- Anytime a person goes through challenge, it is important for them to take care of themselves.
  - Go for a walk
  - Exercise
  - Nap/rest
  - Listen to music
  - Talk to someone to release your feelings and receive feedback
- Self-care needs to always be a HEALTHY and SAFE activity!
  - No one (yourself or others) should ever be affected by this.
- While others may be able to help, they cannot make you cope or get through your problems.

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## When you face a challenge....

- It is vital to focus on what took place. It can be very easy to lose sight of the actual event and run with stories made up in your head.
- Many people do not like to focus on what happened because it can make them feel like they are paying too much attention to the bad thing that happened and it can make them uncomfortable.
- Processing the bad helps them understand what happened.
  - It helps people understand their feelings and get a better picture of what they want out of the situation, that's when they can begin to move forward.
  - Once people look at and process their emotions, it is important to then explore possible resolutions.

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Do you want to be stuck in your feelings and just try to forget about it? Do you want to solve your problems and move past them? It's a choice.

- When we sit in our thoughts of frustration, we tend to make up stories too.
  - We tell ourselves:
    - It wasn't fair
    - They don't like me
    - I'm stupid
    - I'm not good enough.
    - I deserved to get what I wanted, not the others.
    - I'll feel this way forever.



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Please answer these prompts as if you were your student

What has prevented you from being your very best up to this point?

Think about a difficult situation you could have handled better.

Describe the emotions that came to you as a result

Consider the actions you took to solve the problem. Were they healthy or unhealthy?

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## Consider

- Was it okay you had those feelings? Why or Why not?
- How did you deal with those feelings before today?
  - Healthy or Unhealthy?
- If you feel you could or should have handled yourself differently, what could you have done instead?
- When under stress, remember to follow steps toward growth, not destruction.
- Allow your student to feel, it's okay to be angry, frustrated, sad, or disappointed, how you handle these feelings is what makes the difference.
- Is there anything you can change or will try to change moving forward?
- What works for you may not work for your teen, they need to figure out what works for them on their own to reach their greatest success.

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Instead of coping in a healthy way, some students turn to harmful behaviors such as:

- Yelling and screaming
- Cutting
- Running away
- Giving up
- Drugs
- Fights
- Vandalism
- Stealing
- None of these choices help a person heal, they typically make the situation worse.
  - Imagine if we still handled our problems as if we were 13-14 years old, would we ever solve our problems?
- As we mature:
  - We learn to accept challenges and find the right words to use.
  - We learn to calm ourselves.
  - We learn to consider how to change the situation and we grow.

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## Talking points with your teen

- Maintain a compassionate and quiet tone of voice-anything else may escalate them.
- Talk to them alone.
- Never compare them to siblings or peers.
- Ask a lot of questions, mainly open-ended, never assume what they're going through.
- Let THEM figure out their solutions, it will give them confidence and help them believe they CAN do it.
- Any new info you take from this can help strengthen your relationship with your student.
- By understanding experience, opening communication, your student will feel supported, hopeful, and will want to connect more over time.

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## Communication breeds connection!

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Be patient!

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It took a long time to get where you are.

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It is never too late to grow.

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It took a long time to get where you are.

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It will take time and patience to grow further.

- Don't worry if your words don't come out right. If you have good intentions, those will shine through.
- Your teen may not act like they're grateful, but trust me, they'll notice.

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Your feedback is important to us. Please use the QR code to complete a survey or go to <https://forms.office.com/r/btZB7F1Zxw>