

June 8, 2020



CCPS Mental Health Update

Cecil County Public Schools is committed to empowering our staff and families to meet the social and emotional needs of our students, with a focus on behavioral health and trauma-responsiveness, to assure that every student is ready to learn, achieve success, and experience positive relationships.

Did You Know: **Anxiety** is the body's natural way of responding to stress. This is the body's way of feeling fear or apprehension.

Fear and anxiety can cause overwhelming and strong emotions in both children and adults. Trying to shield your child from the fear, may only exacerbate the fear.

Every person reacts differently to stressful situations. **The goal is to help children learn to manage their emotional responses.**

Strategy of the Month: **Strategies for Managing Anxiety**



Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...
www.thepathway2success.com

The desire to control people and events	Difficulty getting to sleep	Feeling agitated or angry
Defiance and other challenging behaviors	Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports	Avoiding activities or events (including school)
Pain in the stomachaches and headaches	Struggling to keep attention and focus	Intolerance of uncertainty
Crying and difficulty managing emotions	Over-planning for situations and events	Feeling worried about situations or events

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What to Watch for in Children and Teens *Adapted from CDC*

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have already outgrown (i.e. toileting accidents, bedwetting, thumb sucking, etc.)
- Excessive worrying or sadness
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Irritability or acting out behaviors in teens
- Difficulty with concentration

Strategies for Managing Stress and Anxiety in Children and Teens

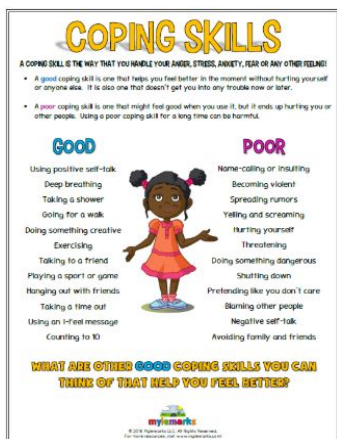
Adapted from Psycom.net, Sheppard Pratt, and CDC

- **Reassure your child or teen** it is okay to feel upset or worried. Also provide assurance they are safe.
- **Limit exposure to new coverage or social media:** children may misinterpret what they hear and be frightened by something they don't understand.
- **Maintain regular routines as much as possible,** especially sleep routines. Try to get up and go to bed at the same time every night.

- Avoidance of activities that have typically been enjoyable
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Overwhelming fear about their personal health and/or the health of a loved one

Resources

- Psycom.net- Kids Coping Skills for Anxiety
- Sheppard Pratt- Anxiety, Try These Tips
- CDC - Stress and Coping
- Children's Mental Health Matters
- Sesame Street in Communities- Comfort Strategies
- Mindfulness Strategy- STOP
- How to Cope with Anxiety- TED Talk (Olivia Remes)
- Apps to Help with Mental Health



- **Talk a walk or get some exercise:** movement makes it less likely that you “stay in your head”.
- **Interrupt the cycle of anxious and negative thoughts:**
 - *Boss Back:* have your child practice saying “You’re not the boss of me, worry brain! I know I can handle this!”
 - *Thought Stopping:* teach your child to stop an anxious thought by saying, “No, that’s not true!”
 - *Create a Character:* create a character to represent anxiety, it’s easier to talk back to when you picture it as a person
- **Do a quick body scan:** have the child begin to control their muscle reactions. Step 1: tense the specific muscle group (arms and hands, or neck and shoulders) and hold for 5 seconds. Step 2: release the muscle group and have the child identify how they feel. Work this from head to toe
- **Journal:** this helps to vent their feelings.
 - *Write and Tear:* write or draw the worries on a piece of paper, read them to a caring adult, and then tear them up and throw them away.
 - *Worry Journal:* write about a worrying thought and follow it by writing about one positive thought.
 - *Worry Box:* typically used best when before bed. Decorate an old box (tissue box). Write the worries on a piece of paper from the day, share them out loud with a caring adult, and place them one-by-one. Take the box out of the room for the night.
- **Relaxation Tool Kit:** fill a box with relaxing activities (chosen by the child). This might be filled with music, coloring books, fidget toys, clay or playdough, books, stuffed animals

If you have a child in need of support and/or resources click on the following link.
[Student Support Request Form](#)

The Maryland Coalition for Families is available to provide the following supports

- Parents and caregivers of children with mental health needs
- Anyone who cares for a loved one struggling with substance use disorder
- Anyone who cares for a loved one struggling with problem gambling

Families and others can reach MCF by:

- Calling our statewide intake line at 410-703-8267
- Emailing info@mdcoalition.org