

# HEART

Helping Every child Achieve and Reach success Together  
Capturing the HEART and #MovingtheMark!

July 20-24, 2020



## MADISON COUNTY SCHOOLS

The role of stress and anxiety play an important part in our lives. It is normal for all of us to experience stress and anxiety in moderate amounts and can actually be helpful to us at times. Anxiety and Stress sometimes act as protective factors and alert us to potential threats or danger. At healthy levels, stress can also act as a motivator, helping us to stay focused and more able to accomplish tasks. Therefore, we don't want to completely rid ourselves of these emotions. We do, however, need to be mindful that too much, chronic, or unmanaged stress is unhealthy for us and can lead to further health complications. We also need to be aware we can actually pass our stress onto others, especially our children. Research indicates when we are around others who have had stressful experiences, we may also feel the effects, even though the event did not happen to us. Fortunately, the same process that allows stress to be transmitted can also lead to the spread of more positive influences, such as motivation, expression, enjoyment, and happiness. In other words, our attitudes heavily influence our children's responses to what they see and hear happening around them.

As parents It may not always be easy to recognize when our children are experiencing stress, and our kids may not recognize it within themselves as well. Kids may exhibit physical symptoms such as mood swings, changes in sleep patterns, appetite, etc. or they may appear withdrawn or have difficulty concentrating and completing tasks. The good news is that majority of stress can be easily managed by implementing some simple practices into our daily lives.

We can begin by simply being present for our children. Each day make some time to just talk or "be" with your child. Simply being in the same room and available to talk can provide your child with a sense of comfort. Don't try to force your child to talk, even though you sense they are upset. You may choose to share some of your own stressful experiences, which may open the door for conversation later or help them figure out a solution to their issue of concern. Remind your children that it is okay to feel scared, angry, lonely or anxious, and that other people feel that way. Assure them that you are confident, in their ability to work through the challenging situation. Help them re-focus their energy in those areas where control is in reach. Creating an awareness that there are simply things in life we can and can't control. The more we focus on things outside of our control, the more likely we are to feel anxiety, anger, and disappointment. When we focus on what we can control, we can feel good, confident, empowered, and a sense of achievement.

## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a tool that can help you and your children practice and help you regain focus. It is simply the practice of being present, self-aware, and engaged in what you are doing and where you are at that moment. In practicing mindfulness, we train our attention to observe our thoughts and feelings and alter our responses towards them. By practicing mindfulness with our children, we can both connect to a sense of inner calm.

Calmer parents = calmer kids, and  
calmer kids = calmer parents too!



**It is important to note that sometimes additional mental health support is needed and that is okay! It is very common for children and adults to experience a mental health challenge that interferes with their development or daily life.**

**The time to consult with a mental health therapist is when any change in behavior persists, when stress is causing serious anxiety, or the behavior is causing problems at home or school.**



## DON'T LET **STRESS** drive you N.U.T.S!

We all have unique triggers that cause stress, and all stressors have something in common. Research has shown that for a situation to be stressful it must contain one or more of the following characteristics:

- N** - novelty; something new
- U** - unpredictability; no way of knowing it could occur
- T** - threat to the ego; feeling your competence is questioned
- S** - sense of control; feeling of little or no control in a situation

The next time you recognize stress in you or your child, identify which of the N.U.T.S. is the source. Then take steps, to calm or prevent it. Following are four questions that can help children and youth reflect on their own experiences in order to discover and develop personal coping strategies.

- What is a healthy way you deal with stress?
- What are unhealthy coping choices you see in yourself or other people?
- Share a time when you helped someone else who was stressed-out. What did you learn from that experience about yourself and others?
- Sometimes it takes courage to cope through life's challenges. Imagine that courage was a color. What color would your courage be?

Heart-Mind Online: How to Talk to Kids About Stress

## WINNING WITH EMOTIONAL RESILIENCY



Winning a race requires mental toughness, which requires focus. If your mind becomes distracted, you can easily lose your edge.

Not only will your performance begin to decline, but you also miss out on the experience itself. It is important to learn to concentrate, which is the learned skill of tuning out irrelevant external cues and internal distractions. In a race, external distractions may be an unknown competitor showing up, spectators yelling from sidelines, or failed equipment; internal distractions may be fear, doubt, fatigue, etc. The challenge is to be able filter through all this information, sort out the important and essential, and put away what is not relevant to the task at hand - winning the race. Learning to navigate stress and distressing emotions like anger, anxiety and fear is an important part of developing emotional resiliency.



There is a science-based trick, called "anxious reappraisal" which has been found to improve performance under stressful conditions.

Since anxiety and excitement share similar body sensations, it works by tricking our brains into reinterpreting our fear of something bad happening (anxiety) as anticipation of something good (excitement).

It is as simple as, saying "I feel excited," rather than "I am nervous!"



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