Northeast and Caribbean (HHS Region 2)
MHTTC Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Tools for Educators During a Public Health Crisis

"It's the teacher that makes the difference, not the classroom."
- Michael Morpurg

Educators have been asked to fill many roles during this public health crisis. They have had to adjust to new learning environments, provide emotional support to students, maintain communication with parents, take care of themselves and their families, among other responsibilities. At the same time, they are experiencing the anxiety and worry about the public health crisis along with the rest of the community. Here are some tools to help.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

It's natural to feel stressed, worried, anxious, and overwhelmed during a public health emergency, but there are steps you can take to build your wellness.

1 BODY

Be physically active or exercise regularly

Eat well, maintain a healthy diet, drink water

Get a good night's rest, keep a routine sleep schedule

Relax your body with breathing exercises and stretching

2 MIND

Engage in activities or hobbies you enjoy

Try as much as possible to maintain a daily routine

Meditate or pray as a way to relax and find support

Take breaks throughout the day

3 EMOTIONS

Notice and accept how you feel, try not to judge your feelings

Treat yourself with compassion and understanding

Talk about your feelings with someone you trust

Use calming self-talk ("I can handle this", "One day at a time")

4 SUPPORT

Reach out to others by calling, texting, email, social media

Use FaceTime, Skype, or other video tools to talk "face-to-face"

Talk about the emergency, but also enjoy other conversation

Ask for help when needed from friends/family or professionals

STAYING INFORMED WITHOUT STRESSING OUT

While it's important to stay up to date with the most current information regarding the public health emergency, you don't want to overwhelm yourself with news or media that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. What can you do?

AVOID excessive exposure to media coverage

LIMIT your media exposure to a single credible source

CHECK for information updates at a specific time only once or twice a day

GATHER information that allows you to take practical steps to protect yourself and your loved ones

Access Reliable Information: www.cdc.gov | samhsa.gov/coronavirus

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WHAT DISTRESS CAN LOOK LIKE

1 COGNITIVE SIGNS

Forgetting things more often
Feeling confused
Having trouble concentrating
Difficulty making decisions

*Useful Apps**
The Mindfulness App
Headspace

2 EMOTIONAL SIGNS

Fear, Worry, Anxiety
Anger, Guilt, Irritability
Sadness, Depression
Wanting to isolate

*Useful Apps**
365 Gratitude Journal
Smiling Mind

3 PHYSICAL SIGNS

Stomach aches
Headaches, Tight muscles
Worsening chronic health problems
Change in energy level

*Useful Apps**
Calm
Daily Water

4 BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

Change in sleeping, eating habits
Crying easily
Increased alcohol, tobacco, drug use
Difficulty carrying out daily activities

*Useful Apps**
Slumber
Productive

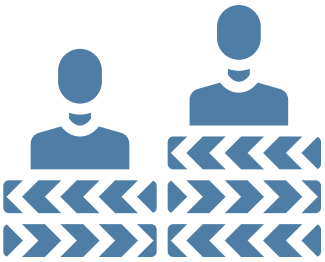
STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING DURING COVID-19

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Parents are also experiencing increased stress due to disruptions in their daily routine and the new demands of homeschooling

Listen to parents' concerns with empathy - hear them out and reflect back their concerns

Acknowledge their anxieties during this time without judgement - this is new to them and they may feel ill-equipped and unprepared



ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

Try to maintain set work hours - establish a schedule that takes into account your work and home responsibilities, trying to keep some balance

Communicate your work hours and when you can be available to parents and students

You may not be able to respond to all communications immediately - let people know you will respond during your scheduled work hours

COPING STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS & STUDENTS

Facilitate a mutual support group among parents/caregivers during this time or ask a parent or other school staff to do so

Provide parents and students wellness tips and strategies to use during this time

Hold group meetings at a set time and invite parents and/or students so you can address general questions and concerns all at once

***Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet is meant to provide an example and does not imply endorsement by the Northeast and Caribbean MHTTC.**

If you or someone you know needs help due to overwhelming sadness, depression, anxiety, or feelings that you want to harm yourself or others, reach out.

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline
800-985-5990
Text Talk with Us to 66746
TTY 800-846-8517

SAMHSA's National Helpline
800-662-HELP
National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-SAFE

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-TALK
TTY 800-799-4TTY (4889)

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