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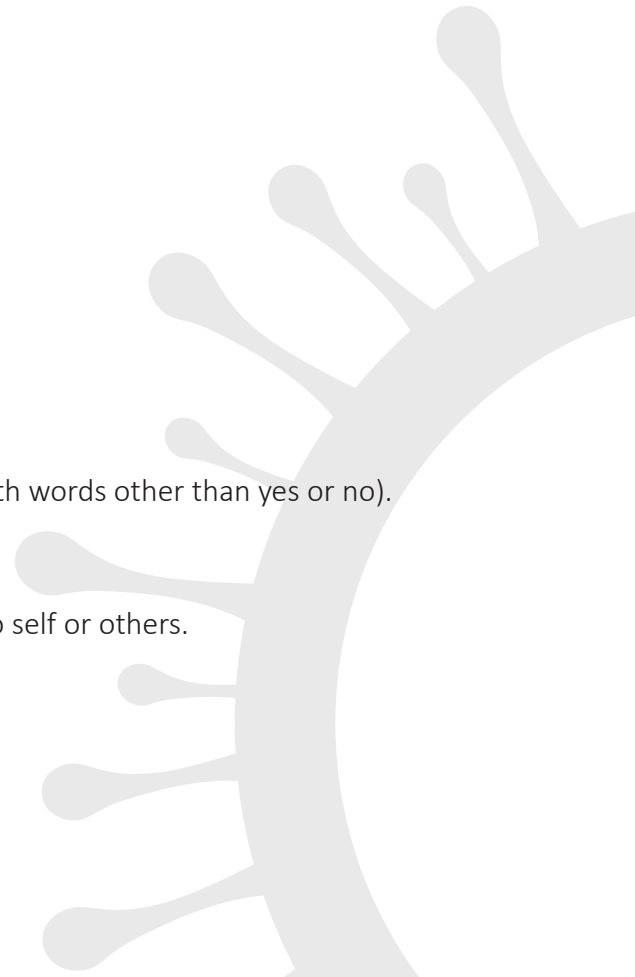
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EMPATHY

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS FROM A MENTAL HEALTH EXPERT

Nothing communicates empathy better than active listening. Research shows that having one trusted adult to talk to can improve a child's resilience significantly (Aquilar, 2018). Even for children who are not very talkative (or even nonverbal) your attention while they play and work can help them to feel "heard." Empathic listening is a way of interacting with others that demonstrates understanding and helps to build a trusting relationship. As distance or hybrid learning begins, we want to have students (and teachers) acknowledge that each of our past quarantine experiences were different. Some had access to online materials for home learning, some did not. Some experienced homelessness or hunger. Some may have had some family members ill or even pass away recently. Unfortunately, some experienced abuse and/or increased domestic violence. Children typically behave in order to have their needs met (see Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs below). If we see children's behavior through a trauma-informed lens we can better support their adjustment back to school and, eventually, their learning. Note: It's unrealistic to expect a child experiencing trauma (long- or short-term) to get right back to learning without first addressing their trauma (enter school counselor here 😊). Here are some tips you can teach your children to become better active listeners:

1. Be present and focused on the child.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Lean in (literally and figuratively).
4. Pay attention to body language.
5. Repeat, clarify and summarize key ideas.
6. Empathize with the feelings emoted without judgement.
7. Check your ego at the door (stay calm).
8. Ask open-ended questions (those that can be answered with words other than yes or no).
9. Try to remain solution-focused rather than placing blame.
10. Respect privacy but be sure to report any potential harm to self or others.
11. Notice any changes in behavior and refer as necessary.



Resources:

Aguilar, E.A. (2018). *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kuypers, L. M. (2011). *The Zones of Regulation: A Curriculum Designed to Foster Self Regulation and Emotional Control*. San Jose, CA: Think Social Publishing, Inc.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



40 Kindness Activities & Empathy Worksheets for Students and Adults

<https://positivepsychology.com/kindness-activities-empathy-worksheets/>