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SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS FROM A MENTAL HEALTH EXPERT

One thing that is certain right now is that things are very much uncertain. As our children continue distance learning or return to school in a hybrid setting, we can assume that almost all students will be grieving the loss of something in their lives (normalcy, freedom, health, life). There is hope, though! As we cope with grief it is helpful to think about how we can become more resilient (the ability to bounce back with adversity) during times of uncertainty. That flexible thinking can help us cope with some of life's most difficult challenges. Since it's so hard not knowing what the future holds for us, it can benefit us to think about what is in our control. As parents/caregivers and teachers we want to model resilient thinking and coping strategies for the children around us. They look to us for guidance on how to respond to stressful situations. If we react in calm, cool and collective ways children will respond accordingly. Resilience can be taught in large part by modeling effective coping and rational thinking/problem solving with a hopeful and positive mindset. Flexible thinking (thinking of something in a new way) results when we experience challenges, persevere and problem solve potential solutions. Here are a few tips to help boost your resilience:

- You've been successful in overcoming challenges in the past. Who and what resources helped you and can they be applied in the present?
- Surround yourself with people who exhibit healthy coping and positive problem-solving.
- Determine whether your issue is a problem or just an inconvenience (What's the size of your problem? Your reaction should match).
- Have a growth mindset. What can we learn from our failures? How does change and adversity make us stronger and thrive?
- Engage in an activity that helps you find purpose and provides some challenge.
- Think about alternative reasons why something has occurred (flexible thinking).
- Think about how you might be able to help others.
- Allow children to tell their story. Have them find a trusted adult and talk about experiences and feelings.
- Be available and present to listen to others' stories.

- Model effective coping with anxiety and fear for those around you.
- Practice self-care (e.g., deep breathing, sleep, mindfulness, meditation, yoga, exercise, self-compassion).
- Practice gratitude.
- Find something that brings you joy/meaning. A busy mind is less worried!
- Try to see things in a positive light. Work to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. What is in your control?
- Use teachable moments and allow others to problem solve independently with your support.
- Ask for help if you are struggling with your ability to bounce back.
- Say positive things to yourself like, “I can do hard things”.

Resources:

COVID-19: School Re-entry...Promoting Social and Emotional Wellness:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&reload=9&v=C6Sb1vVD8RU&feature=youtu.be>

Talking With Children About COVID-19

https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/latest_news/2020/Coronavirus_COVID19_Children.pdf

Helping Children Cope with Change

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>

Teaching Through the Pandemic

https://www.edutopia.org/article/teaching-through-pandemic-mindset-moment?gclid=EAlaIQobChMI56SR8aai6QIViZOzCh0PAQnyEAAYASAAEgI64fD_BwE

Social Stories About Changes at School and Home

https://www.autismlittlelearners.com/search/label/COVID-19?fbclid=IwAR0LU09EE9wv7iB2tSaDq6ofqvI2SLK7U8lAbg5KYTvQDcjYgIM8_PICdHg

Building Resilience and Managing Frustration and Anger

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/building-on-strengths/building-resilience-in-kids>



Khan Academy: Managing Stress

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8SvZkpy40&utm_email_kaid=kaid_388635777404778694464951&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=051820%20Parent%20Newsletter%20Homeroom%20Test%20Option%201&utm_content=C&utm_term=All%20Parents

