



Handling common behaviors and emotional challenges in kids while building their mental wellness

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<https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/>



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**The Kids Mental Health
Foundation**

About Us

Mission

Give free expert-created resources to all U.S. communities so everyone can understand and promote mental health for children.

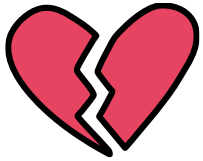
Vision

The Kids Mental Health Foundation is leading the movement for children's mental health, to build a world where mental health is a vital part of the upbringing of every child.

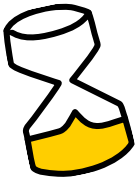


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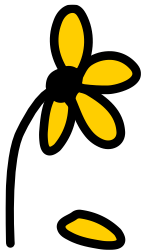
The numbers tell a story: Kids need help.



1 in 5 kids has a mental health disorder, and 50% of all lifetime mental illnesses start before the age of 14.



On average, it takes **10-11 years** from a child's first symptom of a mental health disorder until they receive treatment.



Less than 50% of kids who need treatment receive it. This is often because of stigma and fears of being labeled or judged, or challenges understanding the mental health system.



As a result of decades of cultural stigma, poor funding, diminished pipelines into the industry and low reimbursement rates, the pediatric behavioral health field is **severely understaffed.**



70% of American counties do not have a single child psychiatrist.



150 million people live in federally designated mental health professional shortage areas.



By 2025, the country is expected to be in need of **31,109** child psychiatrists.

Risk is higher for children from underrepresented groups



The suicide rate for Black children ages 5 to 11 has nearly **doubled**.



Suicide attempts for Hispanic girls, grades 9-12, were **40% higher** than for non-Hispanic white girls in the same age group, in 2017.



Children of Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent are about as likely to experience mental health problems as the general population, but only **half as likely** to see mental health services.

National Institute of Mental Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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Treatment alone will not solve the crisis.



We must think about kids' mental health in a new way: we must equip adults with resources to confidently support children's mental well-being before there is a concern.



We develop evidence-informed resources...



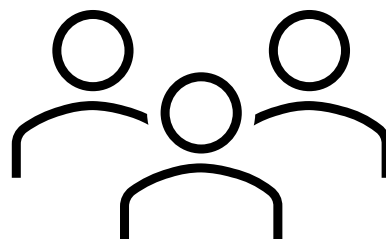
Trending Conversations



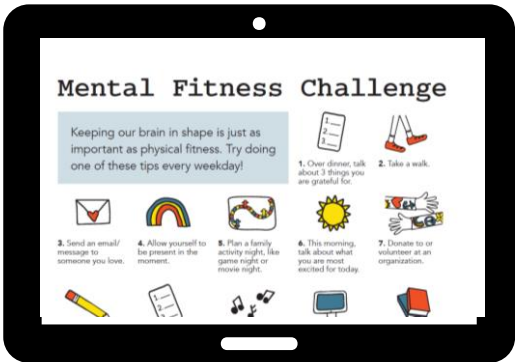
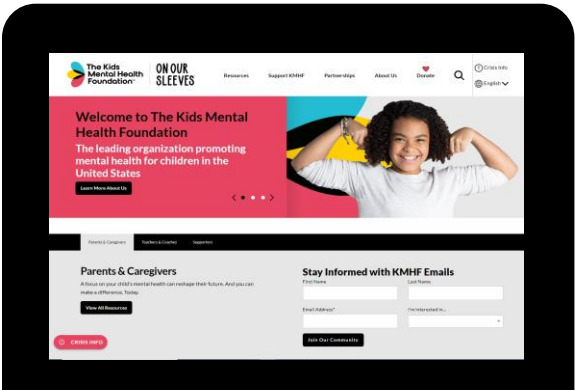
Global Research & Literature



Our Insights & Data



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EXPERTS



Kids Mental Health Foundation Resources & Programs



The Kids Mental Health
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The Kids Mental Health Foundation creates and distributes evidence-informed resources for free to every community in the U.S.



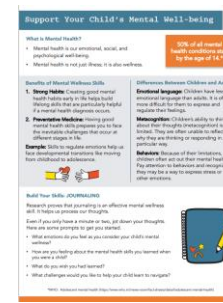
Parents,
Caregivers &
Mentors



Teachers &
Schools



Youth-Serving
Organizations &
Coaches



Employers



Primary Care
Providers



Entertainment
Industry

With the goal to:

Break
Stigmas



Breaking the stigma is crucial to building a supportive and empowering environment for kids and families.

Increase
Literacy



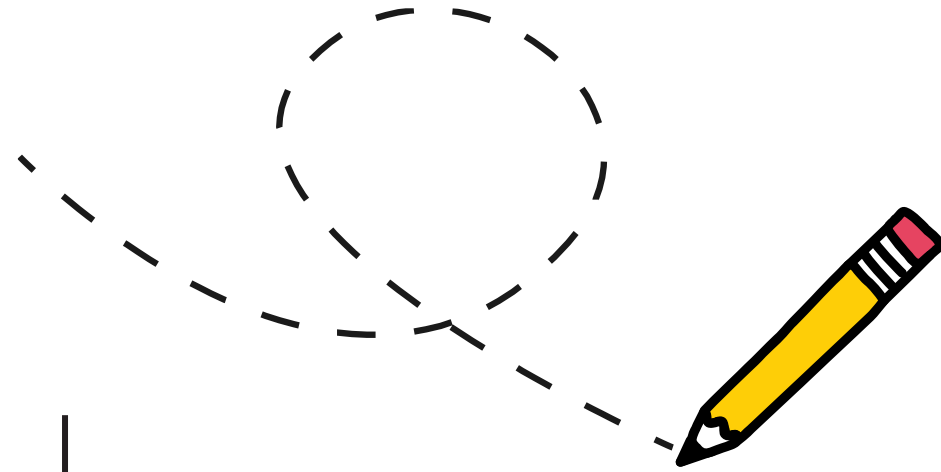
Build an understanding of mental health and how to talk about it, know how to express feelings, recognize signs of concerns, and how to seek help when necessary.

Teach
Skills



Just like we know a child should eat their veggies and move their body to be physically healthy, we teach what they need for their mental health. KMHF tools show adults how to model the habits and skills we want children to emulate.

Resources and curricula
in **ALL 50 STATES**



**MORE THAN 24
MILLION**

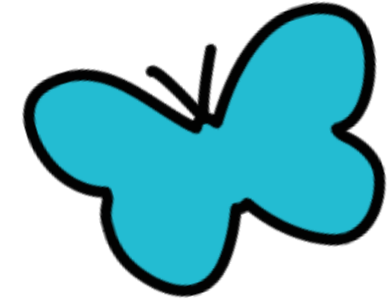
people have interacted with our
content.



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Please go to:

PolleEv.com/whitneyraglinbignall921



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What shapes children's mental health?



FACTORS THAT CAN SHAPE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE



Source: Adapted from WHO's Determinants of Adolescent Health Development: An Ecological Model, 2014 and Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994)

Society

Social and economic inequalities, discrimination, racism, migration, media and technology, popular culture, government policies

Environment

Neighborhood safety, access to green spaces, healthy food, housing, health care, pollution, natural disasters, climate change

Community

Relationships with peers, teachers, and mentors; faith community; school climate, academic pressure, community support

Family

Relationships with parents, caregivers, and siblings; family mental health; financial stability; domestic violence; trauma

Individual

Age, genetics, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, coping skills

These are examples and not a comprehensive list of factors

[Link to full report: Protecting Youth Mental Health](#)

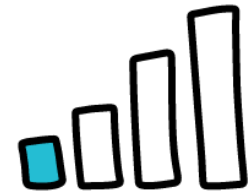


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Factors that Shape Mental Health

Beyond the difficulties of growing up and finding your identity and place in the world, kids face:

- Bullying
- Pressures of performing well
- Current events: climate concerns, wars, polarized perspectives, safety concerns
- Social media
 - Decrease of other activities
 - Social comparisons
 - Inappropriate sharing, bullying
 - Access to information 24/7
- Chronic Stress



Chronic Stress

Stress day after day

- Abuse or neglect
- Violence
- Economic hardships
- Systemic racism/discrimination

A social determinant of health

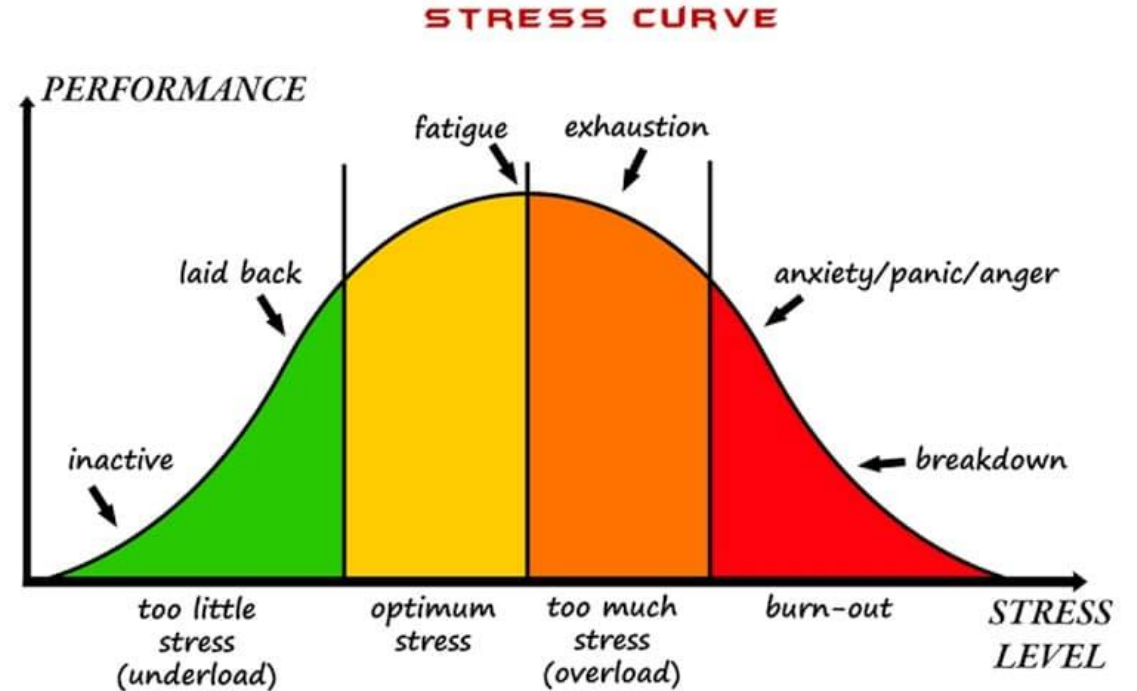
Increases risk of disease

Disrupts development

- Our thinking brain is underdeveloped when our emotional and survival brain are constantly on
- Problems in learning, memory

Increase in mental health concerns

- Behavior
- Mood disorders



<https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=stress+performance+curve>



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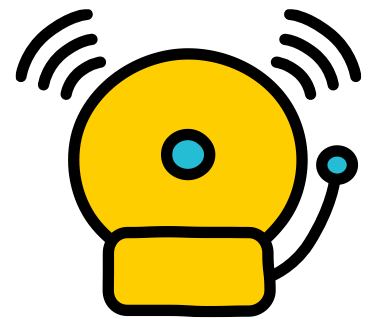
Signs of mental health challenges?



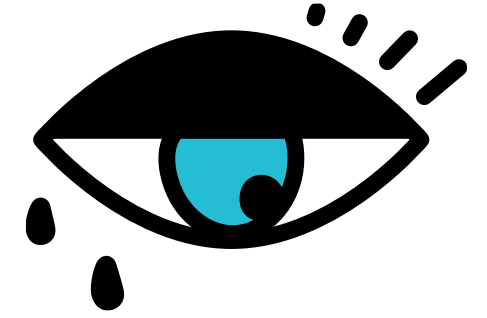
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Undesired Behaviors

- Our brains are **not** fully developed until **25 years old!**
 - Children cannot think, process, and understand difficult interactions and emotions like adults
 - They also do not have the language to express themselves
- This means behavior is often their way of trying to communicate:
 - Not listening or breaking rules
 - Talking back
 - Leaving the classroom
 - Aggression
 - Tantrums



Physical Symptoms



- The mind and the body are connected!
- Children may express headaches, belly aches, insomnia, nausea
 - This can indicate anxiety, trauma, or experiences of bullying



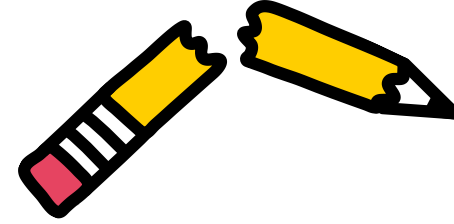
Withdrawal



- Isolation and withdrawal are often symptoms and indicators of a mental health concern, such as depression or anxiety.
- Withdrawal can also indicate current bullying.



Learning Difficulties



When a child is having a hard time with their mental health, they can show:

- Difficulty focusing
- Decreased motivation
- Obstacles to speaking up in class or cope with mistakes
- Trouble with organization
- Absenteeism
- Truancy



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Common Mental Health Disorders in Children:

- Anxiety
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Mood disorders
- Autism
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Eating disorders
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Anxiety



- Avoidance
- Excessive worry
- Difficulty controlling worry
- Physical manifestations
 - Restlessness, feeling keyed up or on edge
 - Fatigued
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Irritability
 - Muscle tension
 - Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying sleep)





Depression

- Sadness, irritability
- Hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness
- Decreased interest in preferred activities
- Increased/Decreased appetite
- Increased/Decreased sleep
- Increased/Decreased motor movement
- Fatigue/Loss of energy
- Decreased concentration, hyperfocus on situations
- Suicidality



Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- Being easily distracted
- Making careless mistakes
- Having a hard time following instructions
- Often forgetting or losing things
- Having trouble staying organized
- Appearing not to listen
- Avoiding things that hard
- Having a lot of energy
- Struggling to sit still
- Fidgeting all the time
- Often running and climbing on things
- Constantly talking or interrupting others
- Being very impatient
- Loud





Oppositional Behaviors

- Being unusually angry and irritable
- Frequently losing their temper
- Being easily annoyed
- Arguing with authority figures
- Refusing to follow rules
- Deliberately annoying people
- Blaming others for mistakes
- Being vindictive



Trauma

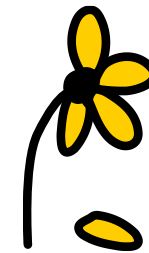
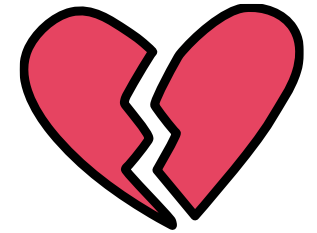


- Obsession with death or safety
- Issues with sleeping, eating, attention, and regulating emotions
- Kids who have experienced trauma may also start to avoid school, especially if their trauma happened at school





“Trauma is not just an event that took place sometimes in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on the mind, brain, and body... It not only changes how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think”



Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*



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Definition of Trauma



Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as **physically** or **emotionally harmful** or **threatening** and that has **lasting adverse effects** on the **individual's functioning** and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

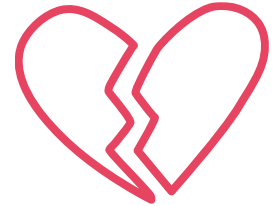


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Examples of Trauma (Adverse Childhood Events)

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse/Rape
- Substance Abuse
 - family/household member
- Witnessing violence
 - domestic, community
- Mental Illness
 - family/household member
- Emotional abuse
 - verbal, lack of affection, isolation
- School Shooting
- Car accident
- Natural disasters

- Pandemic
- Poverty/Economic
- Neglect
- Separation from a loved one
 - removal, divorce
- Incarceration of a loved one
- Serious Illness or surgery
- Loss/Abandonment
 - death, divorce, absent
- Systematic Oppression
 - For example, discrimination
- Deportation/Threat of Deportation
- Bullying



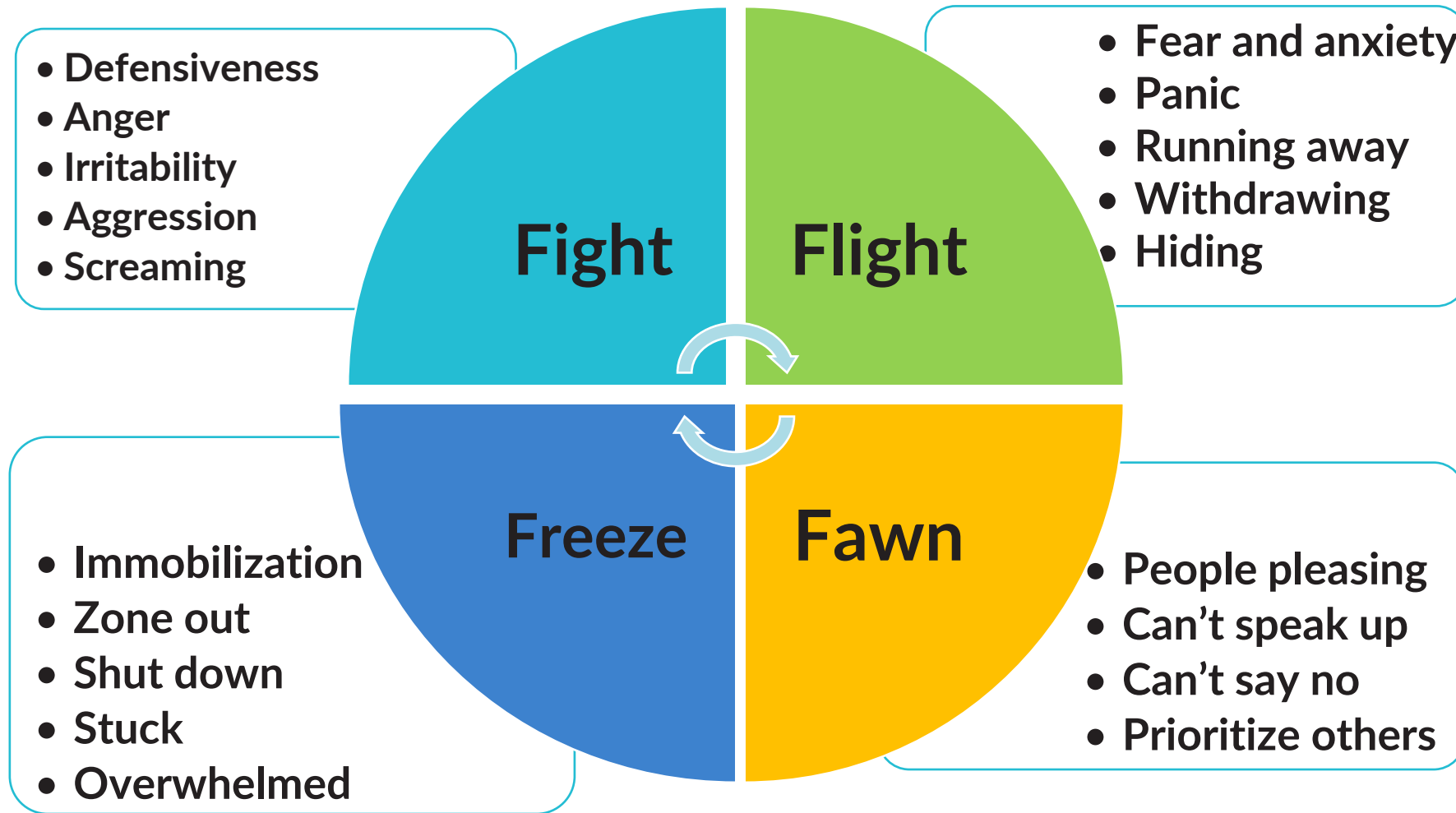
By age 11, youth with ≥ 4 ACEs
in showed 2x likelihood of:

- Obesity
- Respiratory problems
- Poor parent rating of global health
- Poor school performance

Up to 25 times more likely to have
poor mental health and suicidal
behavior



Trauma Response: Behaviors We May See



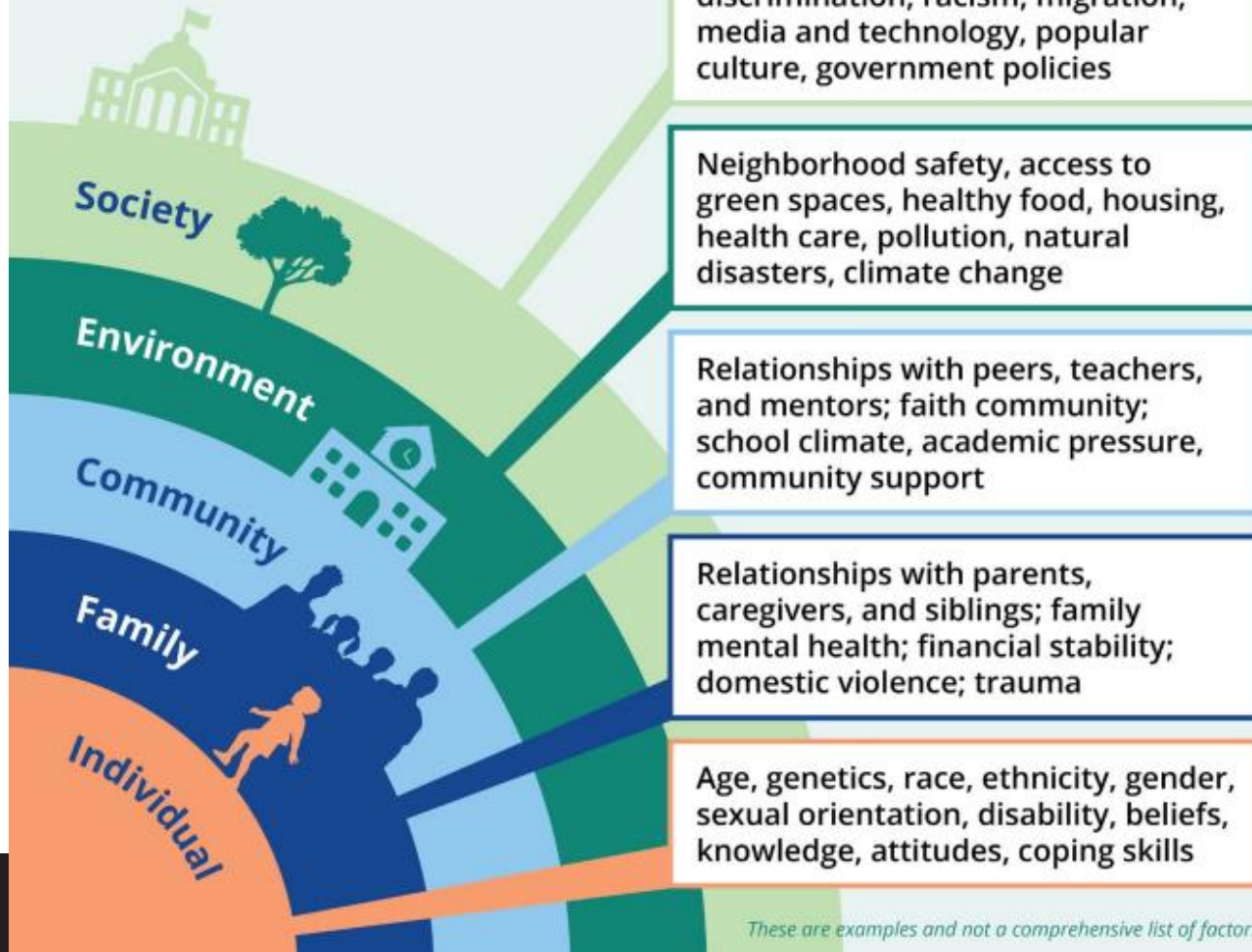
Building Mental Wellness



FACTORS THAT CAN SHAPE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE



Source: Adapted from WHO's Determinants of Adolescent Health Development: An Ecological Model, 2014 and Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994)



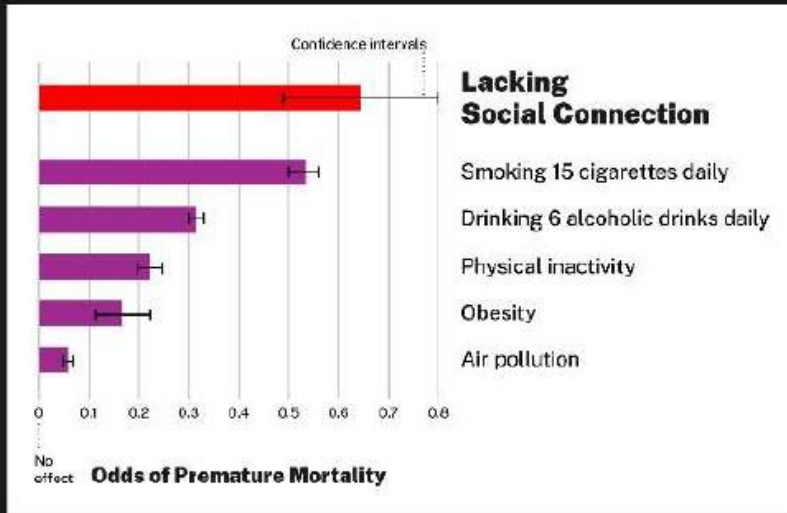
Every level has a role



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The Loneliness Epidemic

Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



Source: Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarro DA. Advancing Social Connection as a Public Health Priority in the United States. *American Psychologist*. 2017;72(6):517-530. doi:10.1037/amp000103. This graph is a visual approximation.



Loneliness and social isolation are **more widespread in the U.S. than many other major health issues**, including smoking (12.5%), diabetes (14.7%), and obesity (41.9%).

Recent studies show that social isolation and loneliness are a growing problem, particularly among youth.

The rate of loneliness among young adults has increased **every year** between 1976 and 2019.

Among young people ages 15 to 24, time spent in-person with friends has **declined by nearly 70%** over the past two decades.

While social isolation is most common among older adults, **young adults were almost twice as likely to report feeling lonely** than those over the age of 65 in 2021.



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"Loneliness and isolation **hurt whole communities**. Social disconnection is associated with reduced productivity in the workplace, worse performance in school, and diminished civic engagement. **When we are less invested in one another, we are more susceptible to polarization and less able to pull together to face the challenges that we cannot solve alone — from climate change and gun violence to economic inequality and future pandemics.** As it has built for decades, the epidemic of loneliness and isolation has fueled other problems that are killing us and threaten to rip our country apart."

*Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.
Surgeon General of the United States
New York Times Essay: We have become a lonely nation.
It's time to fix that.*



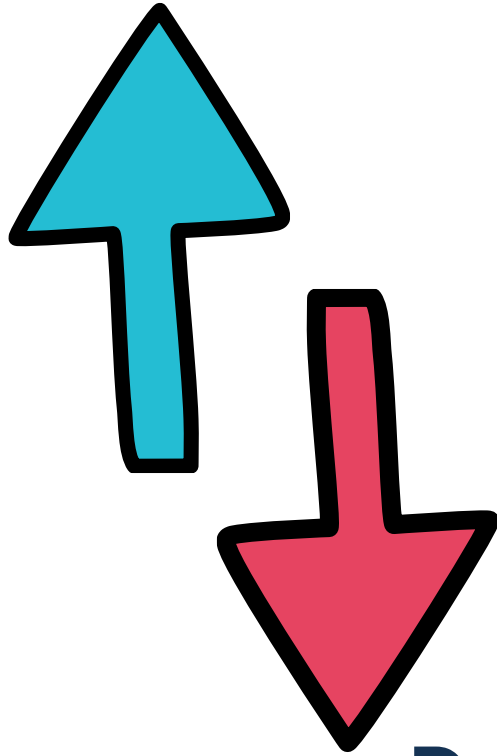
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Belonging is a subjective feeling and implies a person feels like an important part of the social systems in which they operate, including family, friends, school, work, communities and groups



Belonging



Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms

One consistent finding in the research literature is that higher levels of **belonging** and **connectedness** predict lower levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms in young people in school.

[Go to KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org) and search for Belonging

Ranti et al., 2022



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Belonging Benefits Childhood Mental Health

- **Lowers risk of developing anxiety and depression** (Raniti et al., 2022; Witherspoon et al., 2009)
- **Protects against youth suicide** (Arango et al., 2019; Wyman et al., 2019)

Especially for children from marginalized groups
(Marraccini, & Brier, 2017; Tüzün, Başar, & Akgül, 2022; Pampati et al., 2020)

- **Children with social deficits also benefit from increased social belonging** (Diendorfer et al., 2021).



Social Relationships

Community belonging and connection, social support, and trust in others linked to positive mental health

- School
- Faith based or community organizations
- Arts and music
- Neighbors



Network size is a protective factor

- Especially for immigrants, refugees, and transgender people



Family Relationships



Parenting is a protective factor

- Good social and emotional interactions can offset impact of stressors of poverty on mental health
- Living with family, satisfaction with family relationships, and family connectedness all linked to fewer depressive symptoms
- When kids don't live with family – having strong relationships with trust adults are very important for mental health.



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Protective factors - Systemic stressors

Racial-ethnic socialization

- Talk to kids about their ethnic and racial heritage and traditions to create a sense of belonging and pride
- Practice traditions, learn or practice their family's language, or eat traditional foods together.
- Prepare kids for possible experiences of discrimination by having open, honest conversations. Discuss ways they can respond and the right people they can talk.
- Helps promote awareness and positive culture and environment in the community and schools



[Protective Factor article](#)

[Link to resources specific for minority mental health](#)



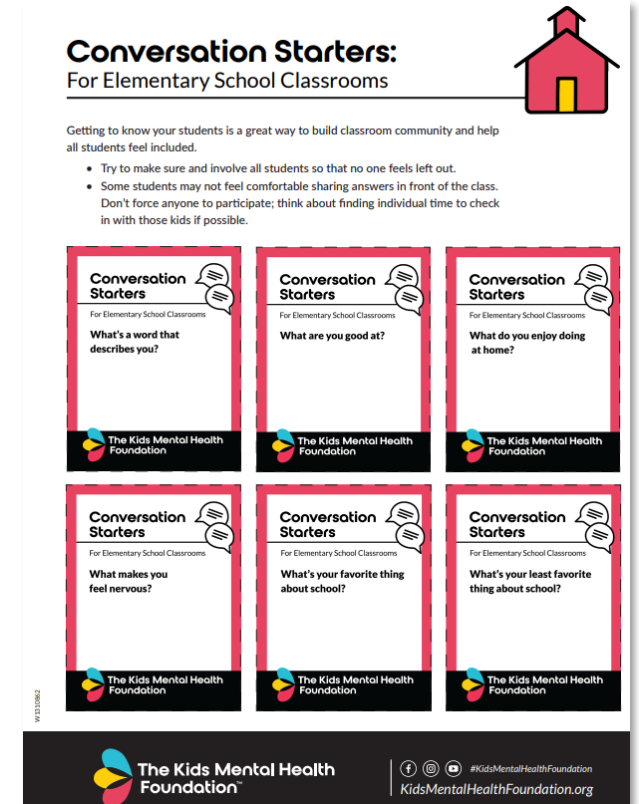
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School Belonging

A sense of belonging in a classroom school is a protective factor for children's mental health

Benefits:

- More likely to engage in schoolwork
- Better Academic performance
- Feeling happy and self-confident
- Less likely to experience negative mental health symptoms
- Less likely to engage in risky behaviors

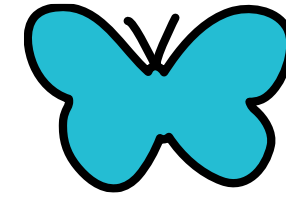


[Link to School Belonging article](#)



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Daily Family Habits



Physical Health

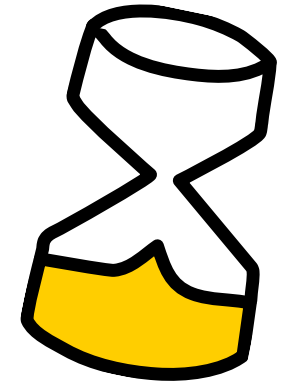
- Physical activity
- Nutrition

Family Routines

- Morning routines
- Family dinners
- Daily conversations

Fun activities together

- Read together 20 minutes every day
- Family board game night
- Creativity time



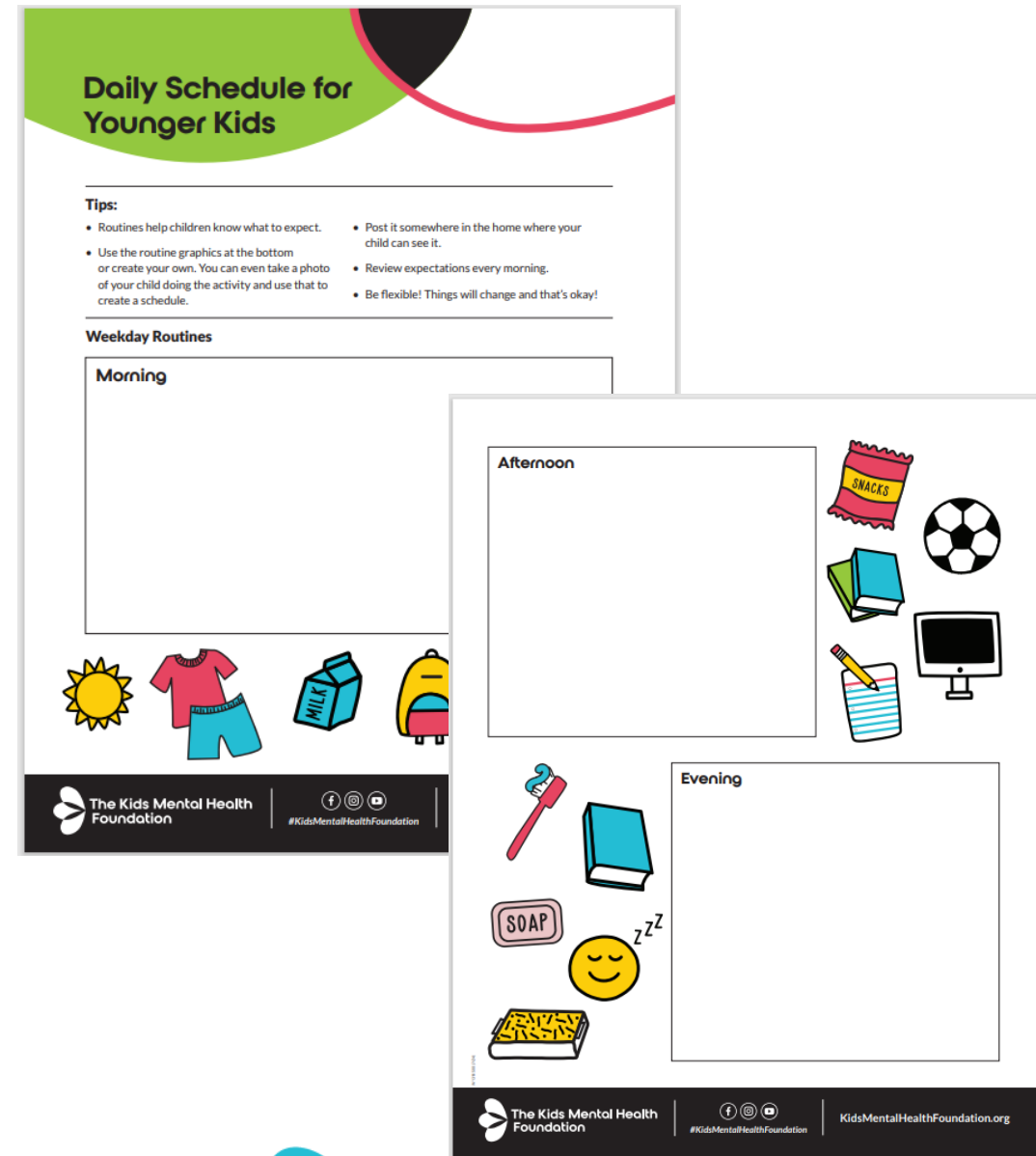
[Link to mental wellness articles](#)



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Daily Family Habits

- Schedules
 - Notice how children watch the same movie over and over? Kids love repetition!
 - Routines help children know what to expect and feel safe
 - Decreases power struggles
 - Added perk: more independence!



[Link to article on routines](#)

Daily Family Habits

“Behavioral activation” is a protective factor for depression and stress

- Valued activities
- Fun activities
- Mastery activities

Stress Buster Bingo

Create positivity by completing these small, yet simple things that will reinforce a healthy mindset. Share over a meal or quiet time what you did that day! Decide what small reward or treat you or your children will get when the card is completed, which equals a bingo.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Listen to a favorite song. What is it? | Text, call or email someone you miss. Who was that person? | Read a story from a positive news outlet or a book with a positive message. What was the story about? |
| Paint/color/draw. Share it with someone! | FREE SPACE Tell us what you did! | Tell your favorite joke. Share it! |
| Watch a funny video. What was it about? | Exercise for at least 20 minutes. What did you do? | Do something you enjoy! What did you choose? |
| Cook or bake a favorite recipe. What did you make? | Write a letter and leave it in someone's mailbox. What did you have to say to them? | Download a mindfulness app and complete an activity. What activity did you complete? |

Share how you worked on creating positivity by using **#KidsMentalHealthFoundation** on your social media.



[f](#) [@](#) [v](#) #KidsMentalHealthFoundation
KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org



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Daily Family Habits: Sleep

Sleep schedules are important!

- Recommend same bedtime and awake times every day.

Can introduce visual routines to help with bedtime battles.

Teens:

- No naps in the afternoon
- Use bed for sleep only
- Limit screens in bedrooms

Bedtime battle strategies and [printouts](#)

- Bedtime pass
- Good morning light

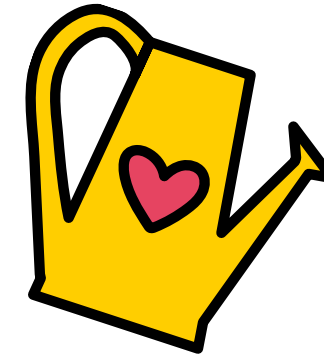


[Link to sleep resources](#)



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Daily Family Habits



Cultivate an attitude of gratitude

- Practice daily gratitude
- Make a gratitude jar

Spread kindness

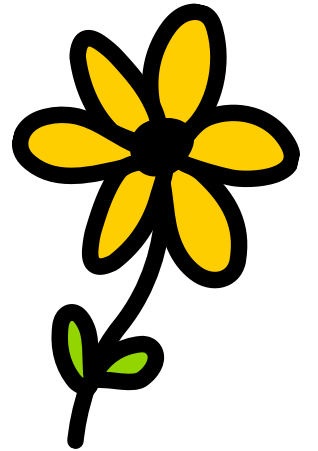
Allow time to unplug

- Technology free times/zones

Relaxation activities

Allow kids to have a voice

- Child directed play- join in and have fun
- Give them choices



Daily Family Habits: conversations

Talk about mental health

Create an open environment. Build the habit of talking about mental health before you are worried

Define mental health. Have conversations with children about what mental health is.

Normalize. We all feel emotions and that even young people can have difficulty navigating through tough moments or feelings.

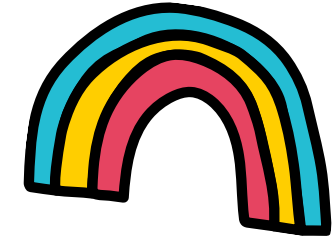
- Share personal examples

[Talking to kids about mental health article](#)



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Normalize the Emotions



“I understand what it’s like to be scared. Tell me about what’s making you nervous right now.”

| Avoid... | Instead try... |
|--|---|
| “Don’t be scared.” (Dismisses feeling) | “I can tell you are worried about going to the doctor. Honestly, I don’t like getting shots either. But I know you can be brave and we’ll get through it together.” |
| “You’ll be fine.” (Promises of safety) | “I can tell you’re feeling nervous about trying to ride your bike, but I’m going to be there next to you to help you learn how to do it.” |
| “Are you worried about passing your test today?” (Leads to anxiety) | “How are you feeling about today’s test?” |



Teaching Emotion Recognition, Expression and Coping



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A Place to Self-Regulate

A space to help self-regulate in while at school, home or in court.

Could be as simple as a chair in the corner and some fidget toys

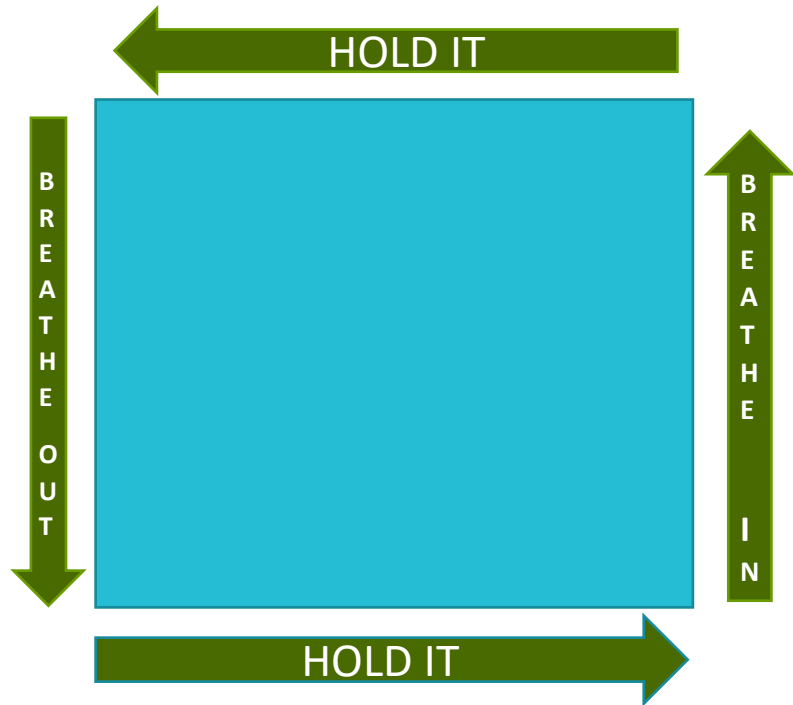
Might also include...

- Books
- Coloring books
- Putty or dough
- Pillow/Blanket
- Snacks
- Small fan

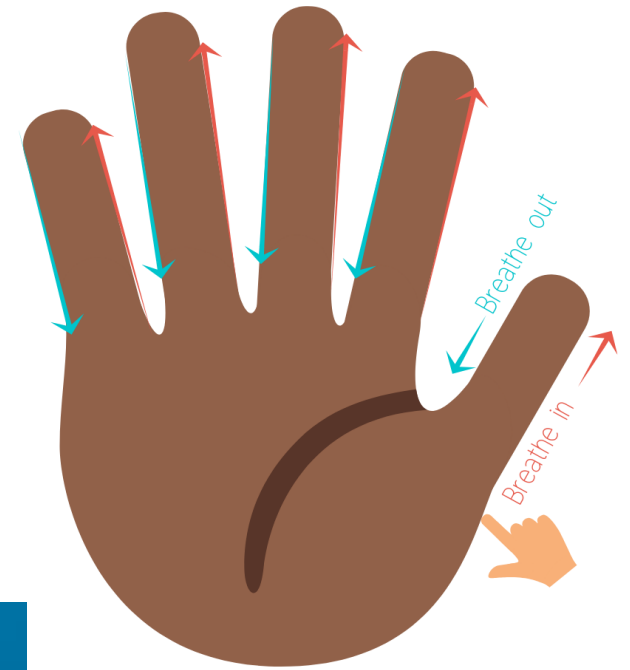


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Breathing Strategies



5 Finger Breathing



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Other Regulation Techniques

“MENTAL VACATION”

Imagining a mini vacation to your favorite place



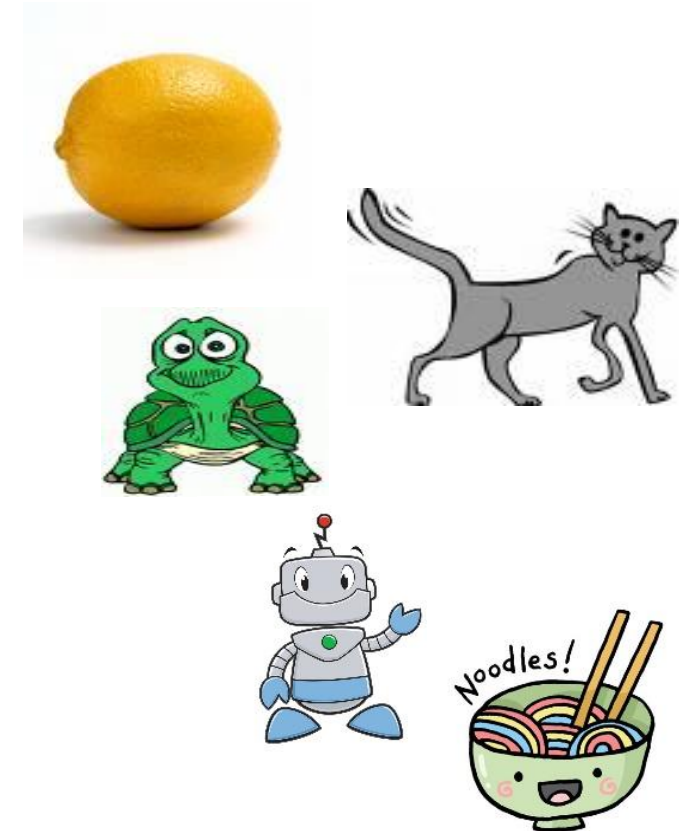
“5 4 3 2 1 GROUNDING”

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste

“MINDFULNESS”



“PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION”



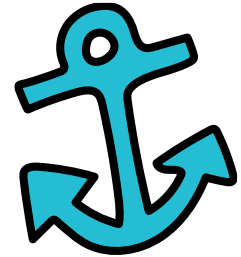
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Strategies for Kids



Promote emotional expression

- Feeling identification
- Answer their questions
- Sit in their space –provide empathy and affirmations
- Listen to their story



Promote Emotional Expression

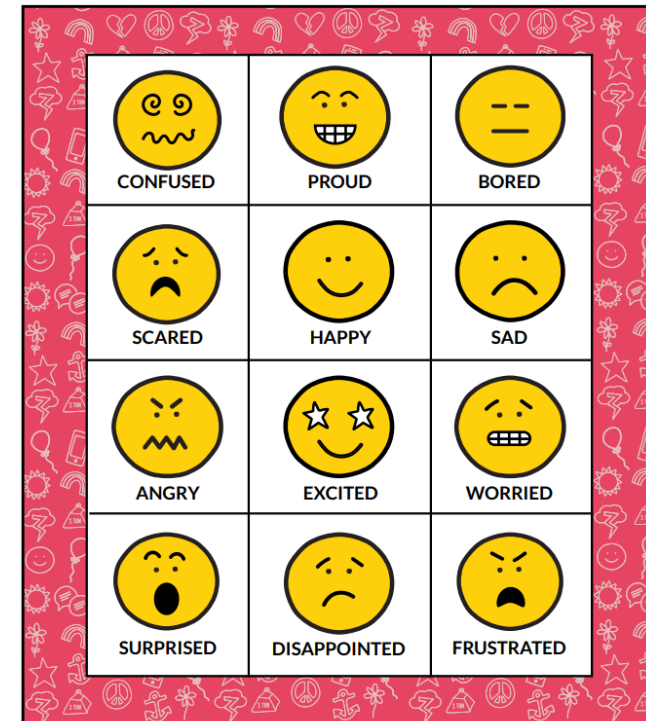
Model talking about feelings

Label the child's feelings

Describe the child's feelings

Prompt child to practice sharing their feelings

Helping Kids Cope with
Emotions: Feelings Chart



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Promote Emotional Expression

I felt sad when _____.



I felt happy when_____.

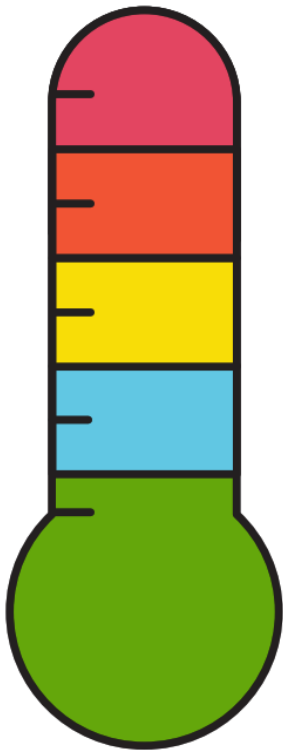







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Promote Emotional Expression

Feelings Meter

Take the temperature of your feelings.



| | |
|---|------------------------------|
|  | <u>Very Angry/Scared/Sad</u> |
|  | <u>Upset or Overwhelmed</u> |
|  | <u>Uncomfortable</u> |
|  | <u>Okay</u> |
|  | <u>Happy/Calm</u> |



Answering Their Fears



Don't worry about it.

You are fine.



I can tell you feel worried.

This is really hard.

You can do it.

I believe in you.

Let's count to 10 and it will be over.

That does sound frustrating.

Tell me which part you keep thinking about...



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Validation

Validation = recognizing that the student's feelings/experience are real/worthwhile without trying to make a teachable moment or to try to change their feelings

Example 1: Tina shares that her little sister had a big tantrum this morning, which is why she was late to camp, and then she missed doing the welcome chant.

Example 2: Juan has just come in from recess and looks very agitated. He says his friend was refusing to follow the rules of the game he made up and saying he should get to make up rules too.



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Validation

Validation = recognizing that the student's feelings/experience are real/worthwhile without trying to make a teachable moment or to try to change their feelings

Tina shares that her little sister had a big tantrum this morning, which is why she was late to camp, and then she missed doing the welcome chant.

Validation NON-example: "Don't worry, girl. Your day will get better!"

Juan has just come in from recess and looks very agitated. He says his friend was refusing to follow the rules of the game he made up and saying he should get to make up rules too.

Validation NON-example: "That's annoying but maybe you should have let your friend come up with some rules too. Remember how we talked about letting your friends have turns?"



Validation

Validation = recognizing that the student's feelings/experience are real/worthwhile without trying to make a teachable moment or to try to change their feelings

Tina shares that her little sister had a big tantrum this morning, which is why she was late to camp, and then she missed doing the welcome chant.

Validation example: "I get why that would make you mad! That would make me feel upset too."

Juan has just come in from recess and looks very agitated. He says his friend was refusing to follow the rules of the game he made up and saying he should get to make up rules too.

Validation example: "That sounds really frustrating. I'm sorry your friend was responding that way."



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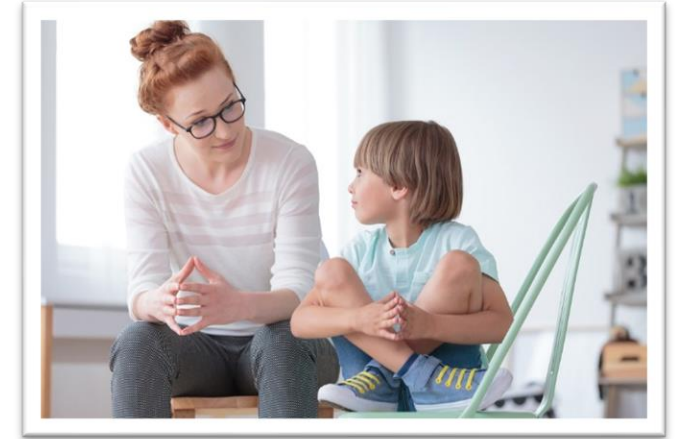
Sit in That Space



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Tips for Feeling Check-ins

- Brief sentences
- Consistent
- Ask the child what they are thinking
- Watch how many solutions you are providing



Let Their Story Be The Most Important

Kids tend to focus on how large-scale events impact them

- I'm missing the basketball game on Saturday
- I was supposed to be in the school play

Kids are supposed to be focused on school, friends, and sports.

Empathize & validate, then move to how they can DO something about the situation



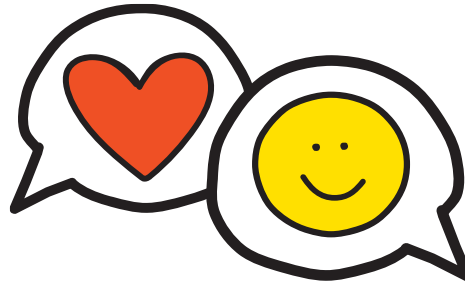
Listen & Help to Problem-Solve

Ask the child how they are feeling

- *I've noticed you seem stressed lately, is there something going on?*
- *Is there something on your mind?*

LISTEN

- Don't ask a lot of follow up questions.
- Instead, use reflective listening



- Ask *them* how they want to make the situation better
 - *Is there something you think could make it better?*
 - *How can I help you in this situation?*
- Ask permission
 - *I have a few more questions, is it okay if I ask now or do you prefer later?*
 - *I have some ideas, would you like to hear them?*



Problem-Solving: Making a PLAN

Problem:

List possible ideas:

Assess the good and bad of each idea:

Pros:

Cons:

Now pick one to try:

***Sometimes you can't change the situation or problem-solve...



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Problem-Solving: Making a PLAN

Problem: I keep losing parts of my homework

List possible ideas:

1. Start putting homework in a folder
2. Have teacher remind me
3. Write down my assignments

Assess the good and bad of each idea:

Pros:

1. Helps me develop a place to put them all
2. I get help remembering
3. Helps me organize myself

Cons:

1. If I lose it, I lose all my homework
2. my teacher might be busy
3. I might forget

Now pick one to try:

Write down assignment (back up plan: Put in one folder)



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Behavior Management

Focus on the **positive** and the behaviors you want to see.

- Instead of *“Don’t hit or kick,”* try *“Keep your hands and feet to yourself.”*
- **Be specific** in your commands

Catch them being good. Kids respond to frequent reinforcement—midmorning or the end of the day—rather than at the end of the week or month.

- Specific praise so they understand what they did well: *“Great job using your walking feet”*
- Implement a token economy so they can receive **immediate** reinforcement and then trade their tokens at the end of the day or week for a reward.

Give them choices

- *“Do you want to brush your teeth or put your pjs on first?”*

Establish Family rules and Expectations

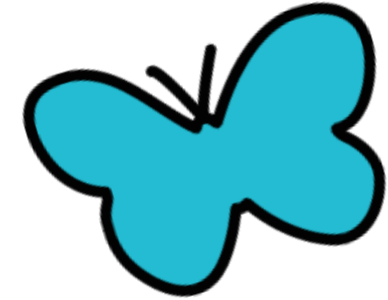
[Link to behavioral management articles](#)



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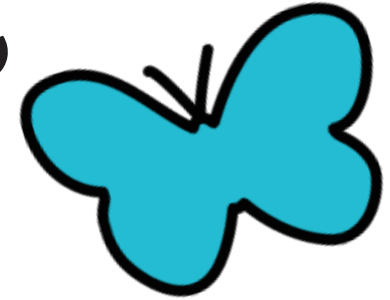
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emailed to you once a week



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Thank You!

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