



COPING WITH ANXIETY & STRESS

A TOOLKIT FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Stress and anxiety can happen immediately or over time. It is important to have tools that you can use to help prevent and manage your stress and anxiety. We tend to feel less stressed and anxious when we are in control. As we have all learned over the past few months, there are a lot of things that are out of our control. One thing that is important when it comes to managing stress and anxiety, is feeling prepared. There are several techniques you can practice, to help you feel prepared. It is highly recommended to practice techniques BEFORE you become stressed or anxious. Here are some “tools” for your mental health toolbox especially when it comes to preparing for school to resume in the fall.

Feeling Prepared:

- Practice wearing a mask
- Practice talking and laughing in a mask
- Practice hand washing
- Measure 6ft between you and parent so they have a visual
- Create schedule and practice (develop routine)
- Talk to other peers
- Talk to other parents/join a support group
- Talking with a professional therapist
- Talk with your child/read a book about worrying
- Review my school district’s website for the most up to date information regarding returning to school
- Stay informed with credible sources



Techniques to Practice

Breathing Techniques:

- **Deep Breathing (older adolescents/adults)** - Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 7 counts and release slowly for 8 counts.
- **Belly Breathing (balloon breaths)** - Practice using bubbles (forces you to blow slowly and carefully to make a bubble)
 - o Use a stuffed animal to practice deep breathing- lay on your back, place stuffed animal on belly and practice breathing in through the mouth and out through the nose. The stuffed animal should move up and down.
- **Triangle Breathing** - Draw a triangle. Starting in the left corner, trace the line and breathe in for 3 counts, trace the line coming down and hold for 3 counts and then trace the bottom line and blow out for 3 counts.
- **Square Breathing** - Draw a square. Starting in the left corner, trace the line going up and breathe in for 4 counts, hold your breath for 4 counts as you trace the top line, breathe out for 4 counts while tracking the line down and then as you trace the bottom line hold your breath for 4 counts.

Calming Techniques:

- 5 4 3 2 1 Grounding exercise
 - o Name 5 things you can see
 - o Name 4 things you can touch
 - o Name 3 things you can hear
 - o Name 2 things you can smell
 - o Name 1 thing you can taste
- Change what you are thinking:
 - o Think of your favorite place or thing/object
- Get a drink of water
- Squeeze something
 - o Make a homemade stress ball with a balloon and flour.
- Say the Alphabet
- Draw, color, doodle
- Listen to music
- Play a board game

Create a Coping Box

Physical Activities:

Make a list of activities that your child/teen can do that involves movement such as:

- Go for a walk
- Go for a bike ride
- Dancing
- Playing a sport
- Doing a workout like jumping jacks
- Play a board game/game on phone/tablet
 - We recommend **www.GoNoodle.com**

Mental Health Activities:

Make a list of activities that your child/teen can do that involves resting the mind and body such as:

- Muscle relaxation techniques
- Breathing exercises
- Imagery (thinking about their favorite vacation spot)
- Mindfulness activities
 - We recommend the **Headspace for Kids** app.

Safety/Emergency Plan:

Create a safety plan with your child/teen that includes rehearsing

- Include emergency numbers
- Include how you will contact each other
- Make an emergency kit (include at least 3 days worth of supplies)

Download a free [Family Emergency Plan and Ready Kids Activity Book](http://www.EastersealsMichigan.com/who-we-are/coronavirus-free-resource.html) at www.EastersealsMichigan.com/who-we-are/coronavirus-free-resource.html.