



Mental Health Matters

Published by ACPS
Office of Public Information



The artwork for the above poster was created by a student artist at The Katherine Thomas School.

Children's Mental Health Matters!

May 2-8, 2021, is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

Sponsored by the Maryland Coalition of Families and the Mental Health Association of Maryland

May 2021

Calming Anxiety in Children: A Child Therapist's Favorite Resources

Source: www.copingskillsforkids.com

LET'S TALK
ABOUT MENTAL
HEALTH

What's Inside

- ✓ May is Mental Health Awareness Month
- ✓ Anxiety and Depression in Children: Get the Facts
- ✓ 15 Ways to Build a Growth Mindset
- ✓ 5 Self-Care Practices for Every Area of Your Life

We tend to tell our kids to "calm down" without ever giving them explicit directions on how to deal with stress and anxiety. Here is a collection of tools and tips used by a child therapist to teach children how to calm down and relax.

Quick Ways to Calk Down

Sometimes you'll need a quick way to help your child calm down and you don't have much with you. These tips will come in handy at those times:

- Imagine your favorite place
- Think of your favorite things
- Name animals alphabetically
- Squeeze something
- Get a cold drink of water
- Give yourself a hug
- Remember words to a song you love

Deep Breathing

People usually roll their eyes initially when they hear "breathing is important". It's so simple, yet has such a big impact on your body's physiology. When you are calm and relaxed, your body is in "rest and digest" mode. You breathe normally, your heart rate is lower, and your muscles are relaxed. However, when stress or anxiety or anger occurs, your body automatically switches into "flight, fight, or freeze" mode. Taking deep breaths, instead of shallow breaths, is one way to tell your body to get back to resting and digesting. Say some of these things to children to get them to breath deep:

- Breathe in like you are smelling a flower, breathe out like you are blowing out birthday candles
- Arms up and breathe in, arms down and breathe out
- Pretend your belly is a balloon. Breathe in and make the balloon bigger, then breathe out and make the balloon shrink.

Make a Coping Skills Toolbox

A coping skills toolbox is a kit that you create to help your child calm down when they are upset, anxious, or worried. In order to get the most benefit from this, you should create the kit before an issue occurs. When your child experiences anxiety,

then they can pick out an item from their toolbox. Click [HERE](#) for ideas of items to include in your toolbox.

Create a Calm Down Spot

You can create a place specially designed to allow your child to calm down in a few easy steps:

1. Find a spot and make it cozy (ask your child for help with that)
2. Add calming tools
3. Explain how to use it and practice before
4. When they are starting to escalate, catch it early and give them a calm reminder about their calm down spot

Use Understanding and Supportive Language

Use the following phrases as a way to support your child, let them know that you're going to support them and help them in any way you can:

- "I'm here for you."
- "Talk to me and tell me what's going on."
- "How can I help?"
- "Together, we can work on this. We're a great team."
- "I love you."
- "Do you want a hug?"

Other ways to help calm anxiety in children include listening to stories or podcasts for children; use visual aids; be sure that children get a good rest; use a journal; or read helpful books with your child.



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Source: www.nami.org

Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, the National Alliance on Mental Illness joins the national movement to raise awareness about mental health. The 2021 message is "You Are Not Alone."

A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others. Mental health conditions are far more common than you think, mainly because people don't like to, or are scared to, talk about them.

However...

- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year
- 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% by age 24

A mental health condition isn't the result of one

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Now more than ever, we need to find ways to stay connected with our community. No one should feel alone or without the information, support and help they need.

event. Research suggests multiple, linking causes. Genetics, environment, and lifestyle influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure may play a role, too.

Mental illness is no one's fault. And for many people, recovery – including meaningful roles in social life, school, and work – is possible, especially when you start treatment early and play a strong role in your own recovery process.

There are many tools that can improve the experience on the road to wellness: medication, counseling, social support, and education. Together with a treatment team you can develop a well-rounded and integrated recovery plan that will work for you.



Anxiety and Depression in Children: Get the Facts

Many children have fears and worries, and may feel sad and hopeless from time to time. Strong fears may appear at different times during development. Although some fears and worries are typical in children, persistent or extreme forms of fear and sadness could be due to anxiety or depression.

ANXIETY

When children do not outgrow the fears and worries that are typical in young children, or when there are so many fears and worries that they interfere with school, home, or play activities, the child may be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Examples of different types of anxiety disorders include:

- Being very afraid when away from parents (separation anxiety)
- Having extreme fear about a specific thing or situation (phobias)
- Being very afraid of school and other places where there are people (social anxiety)
- Being very worried about the future and about bad

things happening (general anxiety)

- Having repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected, intense fear that comes with heart pounding, trouble breathing, or feeling dizzy, shaky, or sweaty (panic disorder)

Anxiety symptoms can also include trouble sleeping, as well as physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches.

DEPRESSION

Occasionally being sad or feeling hopeless is part of every child's life. However, some children feel sad or uninterested in things that they used to enjoy, or feel helpless or hopeless in situations they are able to change. When children feel persistent sadness and hopelessness, they may be diagnosed with depression. Examples of behaviors often seen in children with depression include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable a lot of the time
- Not wanting to do, or enjoy doing, fun things
- Showing changes in eating or sleep patterns
- Showing changes in energy
- Having a hard time paying attention
- Feeling worthless, useless, or guilty
- Showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior

Extreme depression can lead a child to think about suicide or plan for suicide. For youth ages 10-24, suicide is among the leading causes of death. Depression might also cause a child to make trouble or act unmotivated, causing others not to notice that the child is depressed, or to incorrectly label the child as a trouble-maker or lazy.

TREATMENT

The first step to treatment is to talk with a healthcare provider about getting an evaluation. A mental health professional can develop a therapy plan that works best for the child and family. Behavior therapy can include child therapy, family therapy, or a combination of both. Consultation with a healthcare provider can help determine if medication should be part of the treatment.

MANAGING SYMPTOMS: STAYING HEALTHY

Being healthy is important for all children, and can be especially important for children with depression or anxiety. In addition to getting the right treatment, leading a healthy lifestyle can play a role in managing symptoms of depression or anxiety. Here are some healthy behaviors that may help:

- Having a healthy eating plan centered on fruity, vegetables, and whole grains
- Participating in physical activity each day based on age
- Getting the recommended amount of sleep each night based on age
- Practicing mindfulness or relaxation techniques

Source: www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth

15 Ways to Build a Growth Mindset

Want to increase your chances of success? Then develop a growth mindset. There are a variety of mindsets, each of which can help or hurt our well-being. A growth mindset is simply the belief that our basic abilities can be developed and improved through dedication and hard work. It's not so much that this belief is some kind of magic. It's just that without a growth mindset, we don't exert the required effort, and so we remain perpetually stuck.

But with a growth mindset, we can break through the stuckness and achieve the long-term goals we desire, whether that is at work, in our relationships, or in other aspects of our lives.

Why Does Growth Mindset Matter?

If we have a "fixed mindset", we may shy away from challenges because we do not want to feel embarrassed or humiliated in front of others. But this can be problematic because our fear of making mistakes can lead us to avoid challenges and new experiences – experiences that would help us grow, improve ourselves in important ways, and create the life we desire.

If we have a "growth mindset", we enjoy challenges, despite the risk, usually because we value learning and growth more than others thinking we know what we're doing. Those of us with a growth mindset often build new skills and manifest something more easily because we believe we can and so we really work at it. Developing a growth mindset could contribute to a fuller, more meaningful life because the range of experiences that such a life encompasses will be considerably broader.

The Key Differences Between "Fixed" and "Growth" Mindset

1. **Effort.** When faced with hard work, the "fixed" mindset person may recruit others to do the hardest parts, spending as little effort as possible.
2. **Challenge.** A "fixed" mindset person shies away from challenges, possibly from fear of failure, and may go into hiding as a way to avoid responsibilities.
3. **Mistakes and Feedback.** The "fixed" mindset person hates making mistakes because it's embarrassing. They may blame others or be defensive when criticized.



Changing one's mindset from a "fixed" perspective to a "growth mindset" may seem daunting, but by taking baby steps, anyone who wants to can build a growth mindset.

Here's how:

1. Acknowledge and embrace imperfection
2. Face your challenges bravely
3. Pay attention to your words and thoughts
4. Stop seeking approval from others
5. Take a step deeper into authenticity
6. Cultivate a sense of purpose
7. Redefine "genius"
8. Turn criticism around until you find its gift
9. Value the process over the end result
10. Learn from the mistakes of others
11. "Not yet" is OK
12. Take risks in the company of others
13. Be realistic
14. Speed is not important
15. Own your attitude

In sum, a growth mindset means one embraces challenges, persists in the face of setbacks, takes responsibility for their words and actions, and acknowledges that effort is the path toward mastery. By choosing to make the extra effort to build a growth mindset, you can make your mental processes work for you, resulting in a greater likelihood that you get the results you want and live the life you want to live.

Source: www.psychologytoday.com



1. **Physical Self-Care.** This includes how you're fueling your body, how much sleep you're getting, how much physical activity you are doing, and how well you're caring for your physical needs.
2. **Social Self-Care.** Close connections are important to your well-being. The best way to cultivate and maintain close relationships is to put time and energy into building your relationships with others.
3. **Mental Self-Care.** This includes doing things that keep your mind sharp. It also involves doing things that help you stay mentally healthy.
4. **Spiritual Self-Care.** Nurturing your spirit doesn't have to involve religion. It can involve anything that helps you develop a deeper sense of meaning, understanding, or connection with the universe.
5. **Emotional Self-Care.** This may include activities that help you acknowledge and express your feelings on a regular basis.

5 Self-Care Practices for Every Area of Your Life

All the stress relief activities in the world won't help if you aren't taking care of yourself. Meditation won't do you any good if you aren't getting adequate sleep. In fact, when you try to meditate, you might doze off because you aren't taking care of your body's need for sleep. Similarly, hitting the gym once in a while won't relieve much stress if you're only fueling your body with high-processed junk food. You need to take care of your basic needs first if you want your stress relief activities to be effective.

What is Self-Care?

Self-care describes a conscious act one takes in order to promote their own physical, mental, and emotional health. There are many forms self-care may take. It could be ensuring you get enough sleep every night or stepping outside for a few minutes for some fresh air. Unfortunately, many people view self-care as a luxury, rather than a priority. Consequently, they're left feeling overwhelmed, tired, and ill equipped to handle life's inevitable challenges.

It's important to assess how you're caring for yourself in several different domains so you can ensure you're caring for your mind, body, and spirit.

Develop Your Self-Care Plan

Self-care isn't a one-size-fits-all strategy. Your self-care plan will need to be customized to your needs. Assess which areas of your life need some more attention and self-care. And reassess your life often. As your situation changes, your self-care needs are likely to shift too. When you discover that you're neglecting a certain aspect of your life, create a plan for change.

You don't have to tackle everything all at once. Identify one small step you can take to begin caring for yourself better. Then schedule time to focus on your needs. Even when you feel like you don't have time to squeeze in one more thing, make self-care a priority. When you're caring for all aspects of yourself, you'll find you are able to operate more effectively and efficiently.

Source: www.verywellmind.com