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**Common Reactions to Stress/Change**

Grades Pre-K - 2	Grades 3 - 6	Grades 7 - 12
Excessive energy	Excessive energy	Poor concentration
Frequent crying	Frequent crying	Anger/irritability
Separation anxiety	Separation anxiety	Difficulty sleeping
Increased whining	Increased whining	Fatigue
Regression	Boredom	Boredom
	Excessive worry/repeated questions	Excessive worry/repeated questions

*If these reactions last more than 2 weeks, it could be a sign your child needs help adjusting to these stressors. Talk to your child's pediatrician/doctor*

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**Impact of COVID-19 on [Children's] Mental Health**

- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Specific phobias/fears
- ◆ Grief
- ◆ Depression

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*Symptoms*

- ◊ Hopelessness
- ◊ Fatigue
- ◊ Loneliness
- ◊ Fear
- ◊ Difficulty sleeping
- ◊ Behavioral Regressions
- ◊ Obsessions/compulsions
- ◊ "Acting out" behaviors

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*Symptoms*

- ◊ Clingy
- ◊ Difficulty concentrating
- ◊ Withdrawal/Isolation
- ◊ Agitation
- ◊ Anger
- ◊ Change in appetite
- ◊ Loss of interest/pleasure
- ◊ Hyperactivity

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*Helping with Anxiety*

- ◊ Limit anxiety-provoking media exposure
- ◊ Speak factually, without bias or big emotions about what is happening in the world
- ◊ Focus on the present moment and encourage children to do so too
  - ◊ 5 Senses Grounding
- ◊ Take time to process your own feelings and thoughts in private, with a supportive adult
- ◊ Communicate directly with any other adults caring for your child(ren)
- ◊ Communicate schedule and expectations with child(ren)

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*Helping with Depression/  
Grief*

- ◆ Encourage bonding moments
  - ◆ Games, bubbles, walks, frisbee, catch
- ◆ Encourage connection
- ◆ Emphasize, validate their experiences
- ◆ Don't be quick to force positivity
- ◆ Engage in service
- ◆ Get outside for at least 20 minutes each day
- ◆ Eat 3 meals, 2-3 snacks/day
- ◆ Drink enough water
- ◆ Practice sleep hygiene

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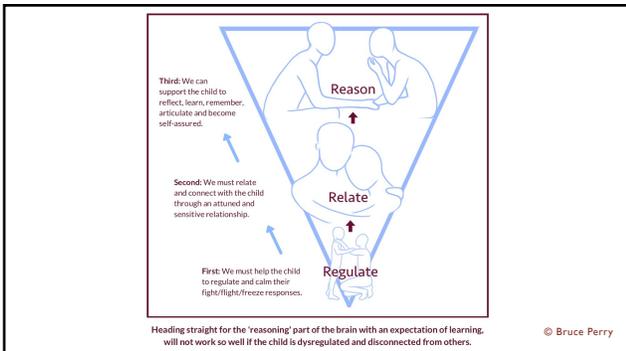
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*Regulate*

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*Self-Soothing*

- ◊ Warm bath/shower
- ◊ Massaging lotion into your skin
- ◊ Guided Imagery (Insight Timer app)
- ◊ Heating pad/blanket
- ◊ Breath-work
- ◊ Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- ◊ Meditation
- ◊ Imagery
- ◊ Gratitude work

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*Sensory*

- ◊ Weighted blanket
- ◊ Compression leggings, sleeves, socks
- ◊ 5-senses grounding or mindfulness walk
- ◊ Frozen orange
- ◊ Stress ball/putty
- ◊ Blowing bubbles/pinwheels
- ◊ Fidget toys
- ◊ Calm-down jar
- ◊ Headphones

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*Relate*

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*Distraction*

- ◆ Crosswords, sudokus, word searches, games
- ◆ Reading
- ◆ Art
- ◆ Service project
- ◆ Movies/TV
- ◆ Talk on the phone/FaceTime
- ◆ Tapping and Counting
- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Vacation Planning

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*Activation*

- ◆ Cold bath
- ◆ Spicy/hot food
- ◆ Exercising
- ◆ Thera-bands or exercise bands
- ◆ Making noise
- ◆ Throwing ice
- ◆ Yard Work
- ◆ Yoga/stretching

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*Reason*

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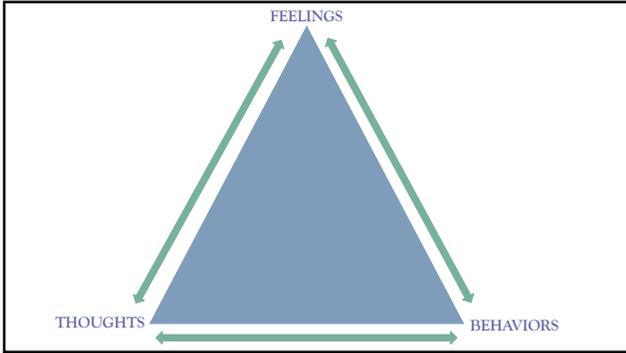
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*THINK - FEEL - DO*

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1.) Identify

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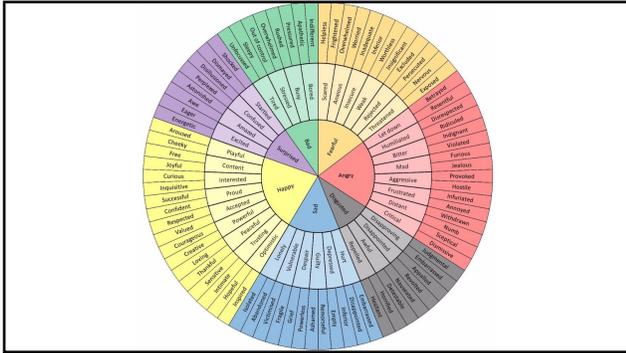
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*Validation is...*

- "Thank you for sharing that with me. I can imagine how \_\_\_\_\_ must feel [insert the emotion word the person used]"
- "I'm so sorry you experienced that. Tell me more about how you are feeling."
- "Oh man, \_\_\_\_\_ sounds very scary."
- "I can imagine that thought/feeling would be distressing."
- "I can see how/why you must feel that way."
- "This hurts right now."
- "Your feelings are important."
- "That is hurtful/frustrating!"

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*Validation is not...*

- "You're overreacting"
- "Why would you think/feel that way?!"
- "Just think positively"
- "Get over it"
- "You're too sensitive"
- "At least..."
- "It will get better"
- "Look at the bright side"
- "I'm sure they didn't mean it that way"

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*ReFrame*

"I hate this pandemic!  
It will never end!"

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*ReFrame*

"It makes sense that I would think this because there's no clear end in sight all the while I've been working, my kids can't get out to do the things they need, our summer travels were cancelled, our nanny quit, and I can't get a moment of silence since the kids are home"

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*ReFrame*

"BUT my thought is not a fact-based statement; it's based in feeling scared, tired, and overwhelmed  
AND I deserve some patience and compassion instead of fear, panic, and dread"

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*Let it Go*

"When a person has a reaction to something in their environment, there's a 90-second chemical process that happens; any remaining emotional response is just the person choosing to stay in that emotional loop..."

"This means that for 90 seconds you can watch the process happening, you can feel it happening, and then you can watch it go away."

-Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor  
*emphasis added*

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*Prevention*

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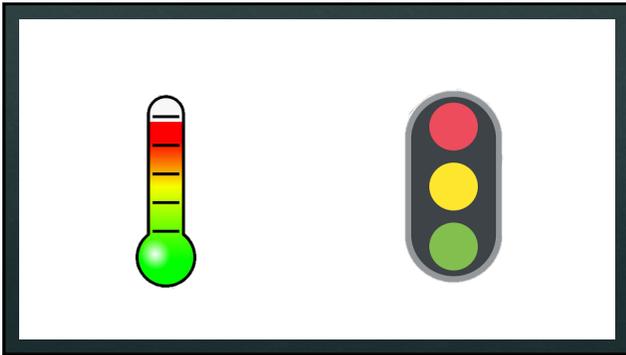
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*Before the Year Begins*

- What have you heard about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where did you hear about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are your major concerns or worries?
- Do you have any questions I can help you answer?
- How are you feeling about \_\_\_\_\_?

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*Every Day*

- PRAISE (more than focusing on poor behavior)
- Express appreciation
- Allow kids choice/control in their days
- Give kids opportunities to practice processing their day (Rose/Thorn/Bud, etc)
- On their own, in school, and with friends/family
- Validate

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*Screen Time*

"Like it or not, technology is an important part of our modern world. It won't help your child if you set overly restrictive limits or send the message that technology is something to fear. Instead, focus on teaching healthy habits that will stay with your child for a lifetime."

American Psychological Association. (2019, December 12). Digital guidelines: Promoting healthy technology use for children. <http://www.apa.org/topics/healthy-technology-use-children>

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*Screen Time*

- ◆ Have electronics in common areas
- ◆ Know what your kids are doing
- ◆ Be nearby & available
- ◆ Engage with your kids; ask questions

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*Screen Time*

- ◆ Signs screen time may need to decrease
- ◆ Set expectations, allow children opportunities for choice/control in setting the schedule
- ◆ Lead kids towards wholesome, age-appropriate media
- ◆ WHO recommendations/potential negative effects
- ◆ Foster and model self-control, self-regulation and goals re: turning off screens

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*Screen Time*

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry:  
 Good health and development require that a majority of the day be devoted to activities other than screen time such as:

- ◆ sleep
- ◆ schoolwork & reading for enjoyment
- ◆ social & family connections
- ◆ physical activity
- ◆ chores

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*Socializing & Making Friends*

- Drive-thru dinner dates
- Drive-in movies
- Walkie talkies on a car-ride or drive-thru zoo
- Ymaker
- Virtual scavenger hunts
- Watch Party
- Outdoor scavenger hunts
- Chain letters/mail/email/e-cards
- Ding-Dong Ditch drop-off
- Group/community chalk art
- Online classes/camps

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*Important Caveats*

- Validating Grief vs. [in]Action
  - *Honoring the opportunity to be in-person*
- You know you & your child(ren) best, I don't
- Take what you and your child(ren) need and individualize it
- If you need further help, guidance, or counseling, seek out individual, family, or child therapists

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*Important Caveats*

You cannot effectively care for your children if you are not taking care of yourself!

Find quick, go-to ways to honor your needs and do something that puts you first once a day: (sunlight, long bathroom break, deep breathing, guided imageries, self-compassion and forgiveness)

It's OK to make mistakes

- o Model managing emotions, frustrations, and let-downs

Make Social-Emotional Learning a Priority this Year

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*Resources*

[lcdspa.org](http://lcdspa.org)

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*Contact Me!*

**Mackenzie Ayers, MSW, LCSW**

Psychotherapist in Private Practice/Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Oak Hill Psychological Services, PLLC

**Email: [MAyers@oakhillpsychological.com](mailto:MAyers@oakhillpsychological.com)**

Group Practice's Website:  
[www.oakhillpsychological.com](http://www.oakhillpsychological.com)

My Professional Instagram: @healing\_connection

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