Curbside Consult with a CAP: Responding to Increased Anxiety in Pediatrics as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

How to Cultivate Resilience

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Hackensack Meridian *Health*

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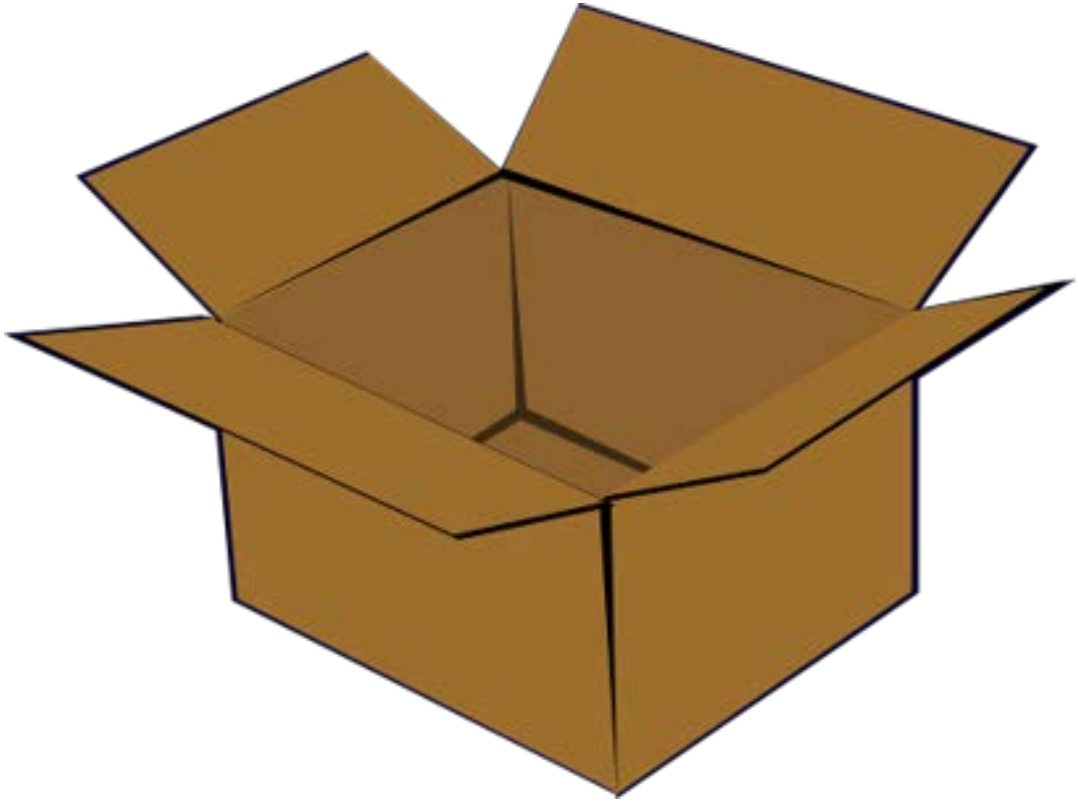
There Are No Disclosures



Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the different ways that children respond to stress and anxiety.
2. Identify whether a patient's symptoms are related to the stress and anxiety, resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak.
3. Understand the relationship between stress and anxiety and other common co-morbidities.
4. Discuss various treatment options for managing patients with anxiety disorders
5. Discuss effective communication around anxiety disorders with patients and their parent/caregivers during an infectious disease outbreak such as COVID-19.
6. Help parents understand the effects of their reactions to stress and anxiety on their children during the COVID-19 outbreak.
7. Discuss various coping techniques and activities for children to implement at home to help avoid stress and anxiety triggers during remote learning and social distancing.

Understanding how Children Respond to Stress and Anxiety

Whether Garden variety or this new global pandemic, children react to feelings of stress and anxiety in predictable ways.

- **Approach developmentally:**
  - **Young children**: Might have more tantrums or meltdowns because they lack the vocabulary to express what they are feeling or sensing in their environment.
  - **School aged children:**
    - Might regress and be more reluctant to separate from family if they mastered separation and transitioned to school and friend groups
    - Complain of more somatic symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches.
    - Seek more reassurance from caregivers.
  - **Teens and young adults:** might present as more defiant towards household rules, as well as act moody and irritable.

Understanding how Children Respond to Stress and Anxiety *(cont'd)*

Youth of all ages might have:

- More trouble sleeping
- Worry about dying or someone close to them dying
- Worry about what it means to receive medical treatment
- Might "stress eat" or conversely lose their appetite
- Withdraw from the household
- Hoard things
- Regress developmentally

How to Determine if the Presentation of a Stressed or Anxious Child is Related to the Current Crisis…..

The First Question??

Is the presentation New or a Continuation or Exacerbation of Pre-existing symptoms?

How to Determine if the Presentation of a Stressed or Anxious Child is Related to the Current Crisis (cont'd)

A common differential diagnosis in child psychiatry:
Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety vs. Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Adjustment Disorder:

- The presence of emotional or behavioral symptoms in response to an identifiable stressor is the essential feature of an adjustment disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder:

- Essential feature is excessive anxiety and worry about a number of events or activities.

Acute Stress Disorder:

- Essential feature is the development of characteristic symptoms of trauma which can include intrusive thoughts, avoidance, increased arousal and a negative mood three days to one month following the traumatic event.

Additional Diagnostic Confusion:
Anxiety around COVID and OCD

Several subtypes of OCD play a role in this current pandemic:

- **Hoarding:**
  - Youth with OCD tend to hoard things of questionable value- wrappers, old newspapers etc.
- **Contamination:**
  - And while we are all being asked to wash our hands to keep ourselves safe, there is still a different quality to the hand washing and germaphobia we see in youth with OCD.

Patient Scenarios . . .

17 yo girl, High School Senior-

- No psychiatric history
- Now-very anxious-every time she walks in I have to turn off TV, radio-she usually LOVES NY Times and public radio-not won't listen-moody ☹-scared!!!!
- Worried she won't be able to go to college
- This is her future-very worried, trouble sleeping, lonely

9 yo Boy-

- Mild ADHD and anxiety-needs SAME EXACT SCHEDULE
- A rubiks cube genius!! goes to competitions
- At school they let him bring out his cube on Mondays and Fridays and the other days they make him run around with peers
- At home, I'm trying to get him to stay active but he INSISTS on that same routine and started crying on Monday saying "I'm allowed to play with my cube on Mondays and Fridays"
- This week said "it's spring break" and "took" his vacation

Patient Scenarios(cont'd)…

9 yo girl-

- Normally active personality
- Now spending unusual amount of time reading in bed, not daily, but 2-3 times a week, saying she is tired, doesn't want to do anything else
- Hard to coax to go outside
- Still eating and sleeping normally
- A few times, has complained/wondered about how long this will last and seeming hopeless that it will ever end.

Refresher on the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders

Under ordinary circumstances, the gold standard for treatment:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Addition of medication, typically an SSRI for moderate to severe cases
- Family involvement is essential and ALL treatment of childhood anxiety disorders must involve families.

**Families can commonly accommodate children's anxiety*

A Caveat….

It is inaccurate to think that all children, even all youth with anxiety disorders or other common mental health issues, will have an increase in symptoms. For many kids, school is their major stressor.

Many kids have said to me:

- "I can work at my own pace"
- "I'm not distracted by my peers"
- " Friend drama is no longer an issue"

Some "shifts from the norm" for families include:

- No rushing from activity to activity
- Enjoying dinner together
- Playing games as a family and enjoying the simple pleasure that rarely are seen in our increasingly competitive and chaotic society.

COVID-19, The unprecedented stresses throughout the United States and the World

- 16 million people in the United States have lost their jobs and filed for unemployment. Many of these were people who were struggling economically before the crisis, stretching a stressed family system even thinner.
- It is estimated that millions will lose their health insurance.
- Undocumented immigrants face even greater stresses.
- Minority populations are being affected more severely and dying in higher numbers.
- Parents without health insurance might delay seeking medical care even when they are presenting with symptoms suggestive of Covid-19 out of fear that they won't be able to pay hospital bills and there will be significant loss of life.
- Children could find themselves separated from their caregivers if they develop the illness, creating great anxiety and trauma.

COVID-19 , The unprecedented stresses throughout the United States and the World (cont'd)

- Homeschooling by parents/caregivers with no training as teachers
- Socioeconomic inequality has left some without laptops or reliable internet access.
- Youth with ADHD are being asked to organize their work without the structure of the school day and their teachers and aids.
- Youth with learning disabilities are seeing disruptions in their remediation.
- Social distancing keeps youth from their friends, peer groups and teachers-the other parts of their support system depriving them of vital connections.

How Can Caretakers Help in this?

- Keep a routine when at all possible. The day needs to have a beginning, middle and end.
- Get a healthy amount of exercise and maintain appropriate nutrition.
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Nourish personal relationships inside and outside of the family.
- Safe-guard their mental health. Reach out to support network, connect with a therapist, and other behavioral health care as needed. Many mental health providers providing free care at this juncture and those resources should be made available.

Back to the Basics for Kids

Keeping a routine:

- Wake up at a reasonable time
- Shower; Change clothes
- Eat meals routinely: breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner.
- Keep designated space for schooling, (i.e. table, desk, not in bed on the couch.
- Approach distance learning like “real school.”
- Get outside every day and get physical exercise by keeping a 6-foot distance (going for a walk, jog, bike ride, run around the yard, shoot hoops, chalk the driveway etc.)

The Importance of Staying Socially Connected

Social distancing does NOT mean social isolation

Youth can connect through:

- Zoom calls
- Playing games online or doing activities in tandem while using technology
- Use other parent approved social media apps

How to Effectively Communicate Through this Crisis

Tips for Parents:

- Speak honestly and avoid false reassurance
- Acknowledge and validate the child's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Let them know that you think their questions and concerns are important and appropriate.
- Adapt your conversations, so they are developmentally appropriate, using language they will understand.
- Avoid bombarding kids with information. As always, the best guidance is to take their lead.
- Try to limit the amount of time TV and radio are on and be aware of your news sources, in order to avoid false information regarding the pandemic.

Tips for Children with Preexisting Psychiatric Illness

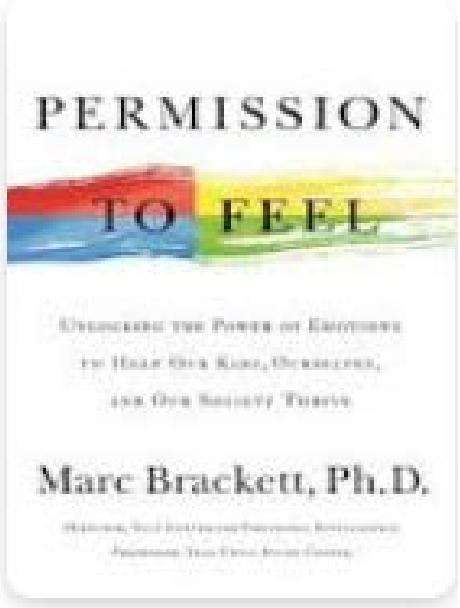
- Carefully monitor the children. *The combination of being at home and the decrease in school pressures will result in less anxiety and stress for some kids.*
- Be prepared for children to worry increasingly about themselves getting sick, family members dying, the world never returning to how it was—the list of potential fears is endless.
- I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE REGULAR PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT. THIS WILL INCLUDE PSYCHOTHERAPY AND MEDICATION.

Treatment Not Limited to What Happens in the Consulting Room

There are many things we can be doing at home to promote resilience and help children thrive at this time, including:

- Altruism: Children and families can take on a cause e.g. sewing masks, emailing or calling elderly in the community, raising money in a creative way for an organization on the front line of this crisis. This can take the emphasis off of the child which can decrease anxiety and can lead to character growth.
- Extra time with pets
- Reading or journaling
- Organizing a child's room and reminding them of the toys they have and their gratitude for them and possibly donating those they have outgrown.
- Encouraging the development of a hobby
- Family time for listening to music/podcasts/audiobooks together; doing a puzzle, watching a family TV show or doing regular movie nights

"Permission to Feel," Marc Brackett, Ph.D



Enraged	Panicked	Stressed	Jittery	Shocked	Surprised	Upbeat	Festive	Exhilarated	Ecstatic
Livid	Furious	Frustrated	Tense	Stunned	Hyper	Cheerful	Motivated	Inspired	Elated
Fuming	Frightened	Angry	Nervous	Restless	Energized	Lively	Excited	Optimistic	Enthusiastic
Anxious	Apprehensive	Worried	Irritated	Annoyed	Pleased	Focused	Happy	Proud	Thrilled
Repulsed	Troubled	Concerned	Uneasy	Peeved	Pleasant	Joyful	Hopeful	Playful	Blissful
Disgusted	Glum	Disappointed	Down	Apathetic	At Ease	Easygoing	Content	Loving	Fulfilled
Pessimistic	Morose	Discouraged	Sad	Bored	Calm	Secure	Satisfied	Grateful	Touched
Alienated	Miserable	Lonely	Disheartened	Tired	Relaxed	Chill	Restful	Blessed	Balanced
Despondent	Depressed	Sullen	Exhausted	Fatigued	Mellow	Thoughtful	Peaceful	Comfortable	Carefree
Despairing	Hopeless	Desolate	Spent	Drained	Sleepy	Complacent	Tranquil	Cozy	Serene

HIGH ENERGY

LOW ENERGY

LOW PLEASANTNESS

HIGH PLEASANTNESS

Pediatric Psychiatry Collaborative

Regional Hubs

- **Atlantic Health Hub @ Newton Medical Center**
- **Atlantic Health Hub @ Goryeb Children's Hospital**
- **Hackensack Meridian Hub @ Hackensack University Medical Center**
- **Hackensack Meridian Hub @ Palisades Center**
- **Hackensack Meridian Hub @ Saint Peter's Family Health Center**
- **Hackensack Meridian Hub @ Jersey Shore University Medical Center**
- **Cooper Hub @ Cooper University Medical Center**
- **Cooper Hub @ Pennsville**
- **Essex County served by Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.**

More information on the Essex Hub can be found here: https://ubhc.rutgers.edu/clinical/community/collaborative-behavioral-health-care-project-essex-hub/collaborative-behavioral-health-care-project-essex-hub/collaborative-behavioral-health-care-project-essex-hub.xml

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New Jersey Chapter

PPC Hub Benefits

- A child and adolescent psychiatrist available for consultative support through the Child Psych. consult line
- A psychologist/social worker available to:
  - Assist the pediatrician with diagnostic clarification and medication consultation,
  - Speak with a referred child's family regarding the child's mental health concerns and to assist in providing diagnostic clarification.
- One-time evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist (CAP) at no charge to the patient when appropriate.
  - Based on the recommendation of the CAP, the PPC Hub staff will work with the family to develop the treatment and care coordination plan.
- Continuous education opportunities in care management and treatment in the primary care office for the common child mental health issues: ADHD, depression, anxiety, etc.

Resources on Coping, Mindfulness/Meditation, and Building Resilience

- **Child Mind Institute:** https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/
- **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:** https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Libraries/covid-19/resources_helping_kids_parents_cope.aspx
- **Parents:** https://www.parents.com/health/healthy-happy-kids/5-mindfulness-and-meditation-apps-for-kids/
- **Big Life Journal for Kids:** https://biglifejournal.com/
  - Resources available for parents to help their kids develop a resilient growth mindset to take on challenges confidently

COVID-19 Pediatric Resources:

- Pediatric Practice Management Tips During the COVID-19 Pandemic *(AAP)*
- COVID-19 Clinical Guidance Q & A *(AAP)*
- Critical Updates on COVID-19 *(AAP)*
- Information for Pediatric Healthcare Providers *(CDC)*
- COVID-19 Resources *(Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society)*
- Caring for Children *(CDC)*
- Talking with Children about Coronavirus Disease 2019 *(CDC)*

Anxiety Related COVID-19 Resources:

- Anxiety and Coping With the Coronavirus (*Child Mind Institute*)
- How Mindfulness Can Help During COVID-19 (*Child Mind Institute*)
- Anxious Stomach Aches and Headaches (*Child Mind Institute*)
- Panic Attacks and How to Treat Them (*Child Mind Institute*)
- Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19 *(National Association of School Psychologists)*
- Helping Kids Cope While Sheltering in Place *(American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry)*

Additional Resources

- AAP News – Coronavirus Disease Outbreak
- Covid-19 NJ Resources – Fact Sheet
- NEW – HIPPA Requirements for Telehealth
- CDC updates guidance on PPE for health care personnel; COVID-19 declared a pandemic
- AAP Postpones Leadership Conference, Shares COVID-19 Guidance
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Coverage and Benefits Related to COVID-19 Medicaid and CHIP
- CDC Webinars and Calls
- CDC Guidance to Healthcare Providers
- CDC Situation Updates
- NJDOH COVID-19
- DCF – Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Over the next few weeks, we will offer several webinars and Q&A sessions to address specific challenges to help you in your healthcare settings. If you have specific clinical questions regarding COVID-19, please send them to us at covid@njaap.org. We will do our best to address them during upcoming Q&A sessions. We will be offering these calls on a weekly basis... can't make it, we will also post the recorded session.

Session #1 – March 23, 1 pm
Click Here For Recording

Session #2 – March 30, 1 pm
Free to NJAAP Members

Session #3 – April 6, 1 pm
Complimentary Webinar
Click Here For Recording

Session #4 – April 13, 1 pm
Click Here To Register

www.njaap.org

RECORDED WEBINARS:

FREE TO MEMBERS

A Practical Approach to Implementing Telemedicine for Pediatrics (COVID-19)

Wednesday, March 25
12:00 – 1:00 PM EST
Click Here For Recording

Update: Covid-19 What You Need To Know

Friday, March 27
12:00 – 1:00 PM EST
Click Here For Recording

Additional Resources:

- NAMI: https://www.nami.org/getattachment/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2020/NAMI-Updates-on-the-Coronavirus/COVID-19-Updated-Guide-1.pdf
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf
- CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html
- SAMHSA: https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus
- NY Times: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/parenting/coronavirus-kids-events-cancelled.html?smid=em-share
- Verizon Low-Income Internet Program: http://www.njshares.org/otherprograms/communications-lifeline.asp

Questions?

Please contact:

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