Re-opening Schools with Children's Mental Health In Mind:

The Imperative of Adopting a Growth Mindset

A Psychiatrist and School Counselor in Conversation

JENNIFER ABRAMSON, MD

CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST

PEDIATRIC PSYCHIATRY COLLABORATIVE,

ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM HUBS

@ GORYEB CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL & @ NEWTON MEDICAL CENTER

ANN DEGENNARO, M.A.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE COUNSELOR

LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL

LAWRENCE, NJ

Funder and Partners

New Jersey Department of Children and Families

Hackensack Meridian *Health*

Cooper University Health Care

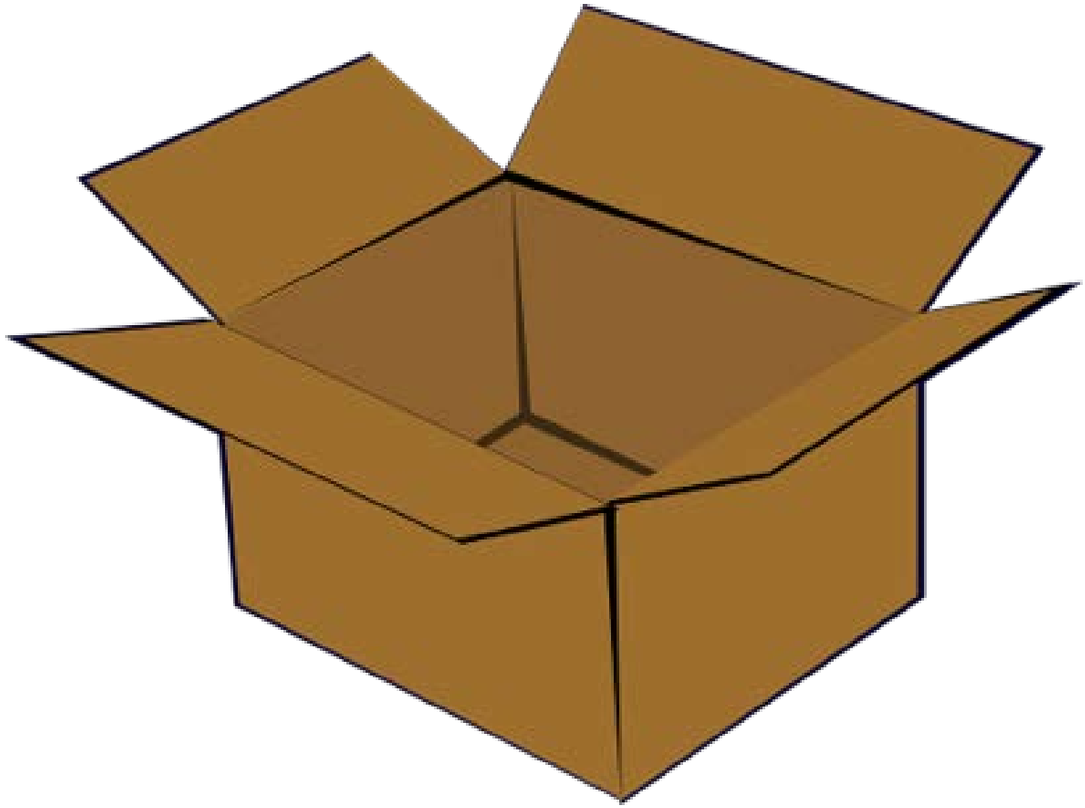
The Children's Hospital
AT SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
A MEMBER OF SAINT PETER'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
Treating you better...for life.

Atlantic Health System
Goryeb Children's Hospital

St. Joseph's Health
ST. JOSEPH'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

New Jersey Chapter
INCORPORATED IN NEW JERSEY
American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

There Are No Disclosures



Today's Learning Objectives:

- Identify common mental/behavioral health concerns of patients and families that present for well child visits in process of a return to school
- Describe steps schools are taking to support students' mental health needs upon return to school
- Discuss how parents/caregivers can support their children's adjustment back to a school routine
- Discuss how various return to school routines can impact a child's anxiety, depression, or ADHD symptoms
- Identify tools to support the socialization of children as they return to school
- Identify tools for supporting patients and families through a time of uncertainty
- Identify strategies parents/caregivers can implement for improved sleep hygiene as part of the transition back to school

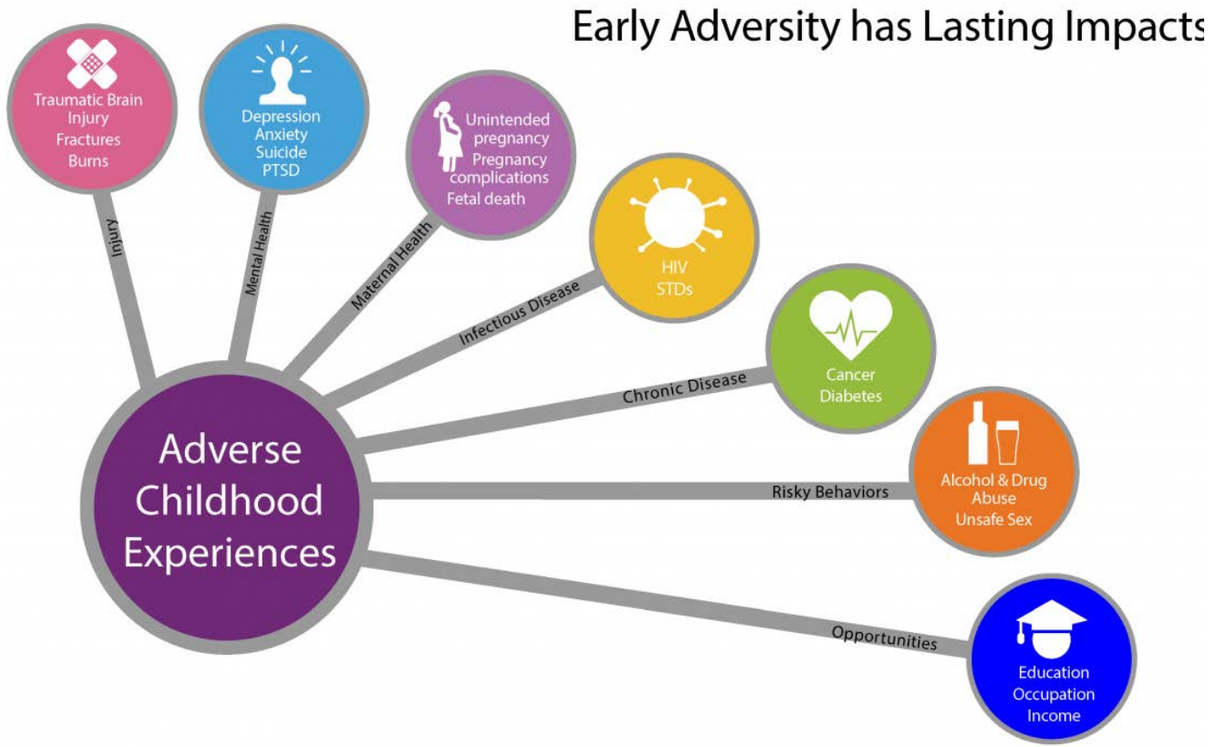
Scope of the Pandemic in New Jersey

- Current Data: 189,000 cases
- Nearly 16,000 deaths
- New Jersey among the three states hit hardest by Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in children
- Current increase in transmission from summer lows

Covid 19 as an Adverse Childhood Experience

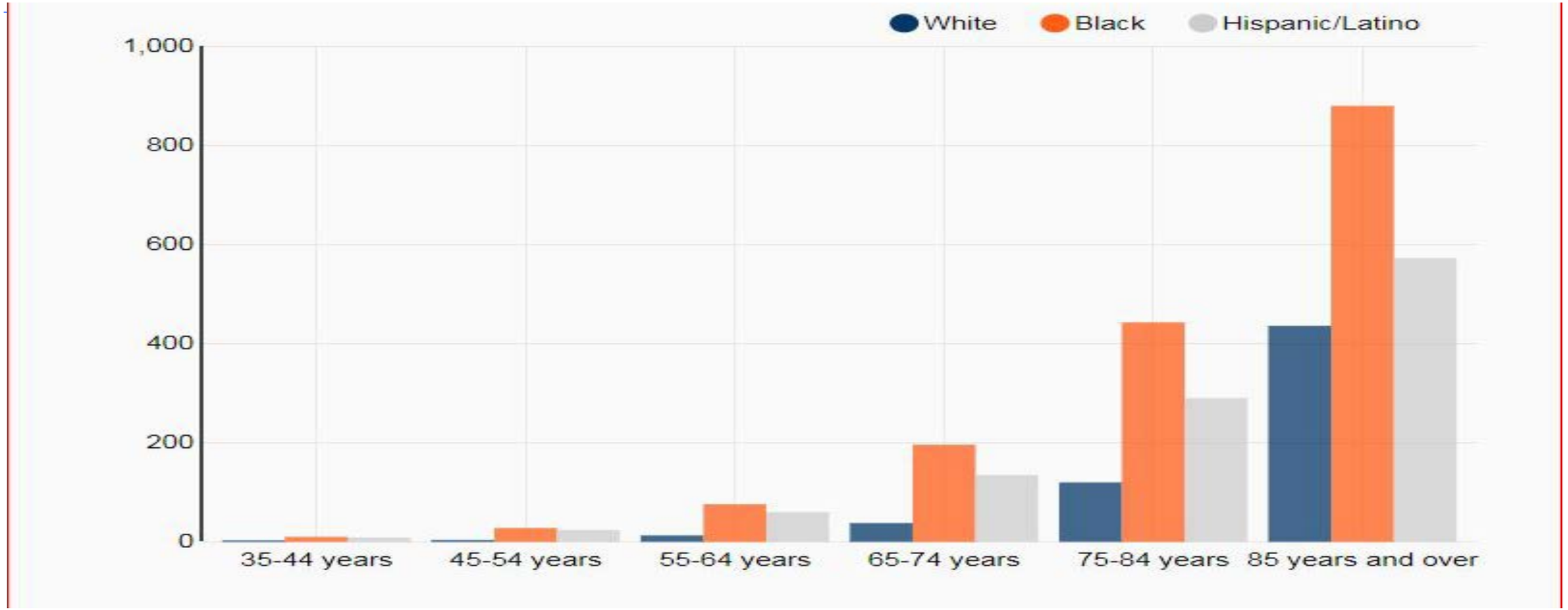
Definition: potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood.

CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences Study



Type to enter a caption.

People of color disproportionately affected by Covid 19



Rates of death per 100,000 by age and race

Developmental Framework for How Children Respond to Stress

Mental Health of Children in the Pandemic

- Social determinants of health affected by Covid-19-housing, food security, medical care.
- Threats to mental health: social isolation, economic shutdown, increased exposure to parental mental illness, child maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence
- Loss of safety net of school including meals, safe spaces, safe adults looking in on kids, mental health services, daily structure
- Parents that have lost jobs are under increasing stress so less likely to be stable force for their children

Determining if mental health state is related to Pandemic

- The first question is whether the presentation is new or a continuation or exacerbation of pre existing symptoms.
- A common differential dilemma in child psychiatry is an Adjustment disorder vs. Generalized Anxiety Disorder or Major Depression.
- *The presence of emotional or behavioral symptoms in response to an identifiable stressor is the essential feature of an adjustment disorder.*

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.” There are also families who feel that for the first time they are not rushing from activity to activity; instead they are having dinner together, playing games as a family and enjoying the simple pleasure that rarely are seen in our increasingly competitive and chaotic society.

Return to School

- **The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.**
- How can Parents support their kids return to school?
- How can Pediatricians support kids return to school?
- How can Schools support children especially those with mental health histories?

Road to Re-Opening Schools

- Plans in flux still-Governor Murphy announces schools may go entirely virtual
- Based on the recommendations from NJDOE the following are to be addressed in all schools during both virtual and in person teaching:

  - Create Trauma Informed SEL
  - Gather information from key stakeholders (surveys, focus groups, virtual meetings, etc.)
  - Prepare for careful conversations around key topics:
    - Grief, loss, trauma
    - Mental health
    - Bias, prejudice, stigma
    - Fear and anxiety
    - Preparedness, hope, resilience

What does Re-opening Look Like?

Most schools in NJ are providing a hybrid learning plan.

- Option #1: Stay virtual. Some are allowing teachers to come to school and teach virtual from their classrooms while students are home
- Option #2: A hybrid form of learning where virtual and some in person learning is offered.
- Option #3: Students are permitted to attend school (seen more with younger students)

How can we support children's Mental Health through this school transition

Tier 1 – Prevention and Universal Supports

Tier 2 – Enhanced Supports for students identified as at-risk for mental health and/or substance abuse

Tier 3 – Individualized and intensive support for students needing mental health and/or substance abuse interventions

What Are The Effects of Social Isolation on Mental Health?

Research reveals that chronic loneliness has the following effects:

- Increased stress ("fight or flight") response and higher levels of **cortisol, the stress hormone**
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased incidence of **alcohol and drug use** as self-medication for the pain of loneliness
- Higher levels of depression and anxiety
- Decline in self-care, such as bathing, grooming, and nutrition
- Negative outlook and sense of hopelessness
- Greater **risk of suicide**.
- Moreover, the symptoms of loneliness extend to physical health as well as mental health. In fact, research shows that chronic loneliness is **worse for physical health** than obesity, smoking, or high blood pressure.

The Important Role of Pediatricians

It is CRITICAL to create a safe environment for children to feel free to talk

- Speak with patients without parents/caregivers in the room and be candid with them. Check in about their home life during the pandemic
- Screen using the PPC approved mental health/substance use screening tools and ACE's Questionnaire as needed.
- Identify the patient's area of concern and refer to the PPC Hub or other outside services as needed
- Discuss coping skills patients can utilize to help them get through tough times.
- Ask patient to identify AT LEAST one trusted adult they can talk with when they are feeling sad, angry, etc.
- Encourage patients to seek help when needed from School Mental Health Professionals,(ie. SAC, Guidance Counselor, etc.)

The Important Role of Pediatricians cont'd

- Engage the parents/caregivers in conversations. They can be just as important as the child!
- Gather information during patient visits about the following during the pandemic
  - Safety, food
  - financial situation
  - housing and employment status.

  **This all affects children's mental health, growth and development*
  - Provide resources to families as needed and reach to the PPC Hub for assistance when unsure.

Connecting Children with School Mental Health Resources in a Virtual School Environment

Student Assistance Counselors(SAC's), Guidance Counselors, Child Study Team Members, School Psychologists can be accessed on respective school websites.

A shift to offer virtual support groups for students in topic areas including:

- LGBTQ
- Grief
- Recovery
- Self-Esteem
- School transition (middle-high school)
- Individual counseling sessions as needed

Resources Schools can link Families to:

- Pediatricians and Mental Health Professionals
- National Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990
- Text TalkWithUsto: 66746
- National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7733
- National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
- Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide(SPTS) www.sptsusa.org

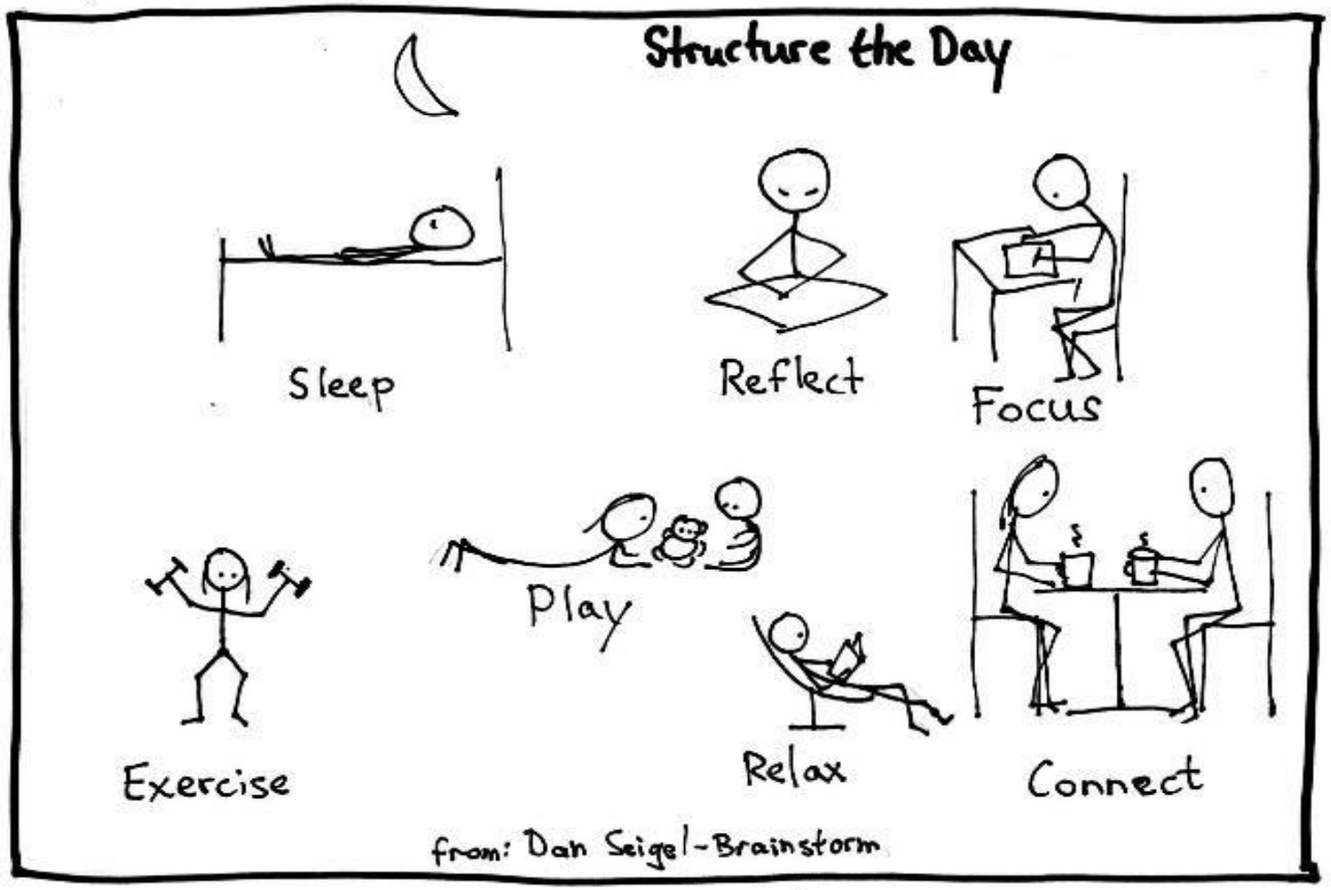
Parental Mental Health

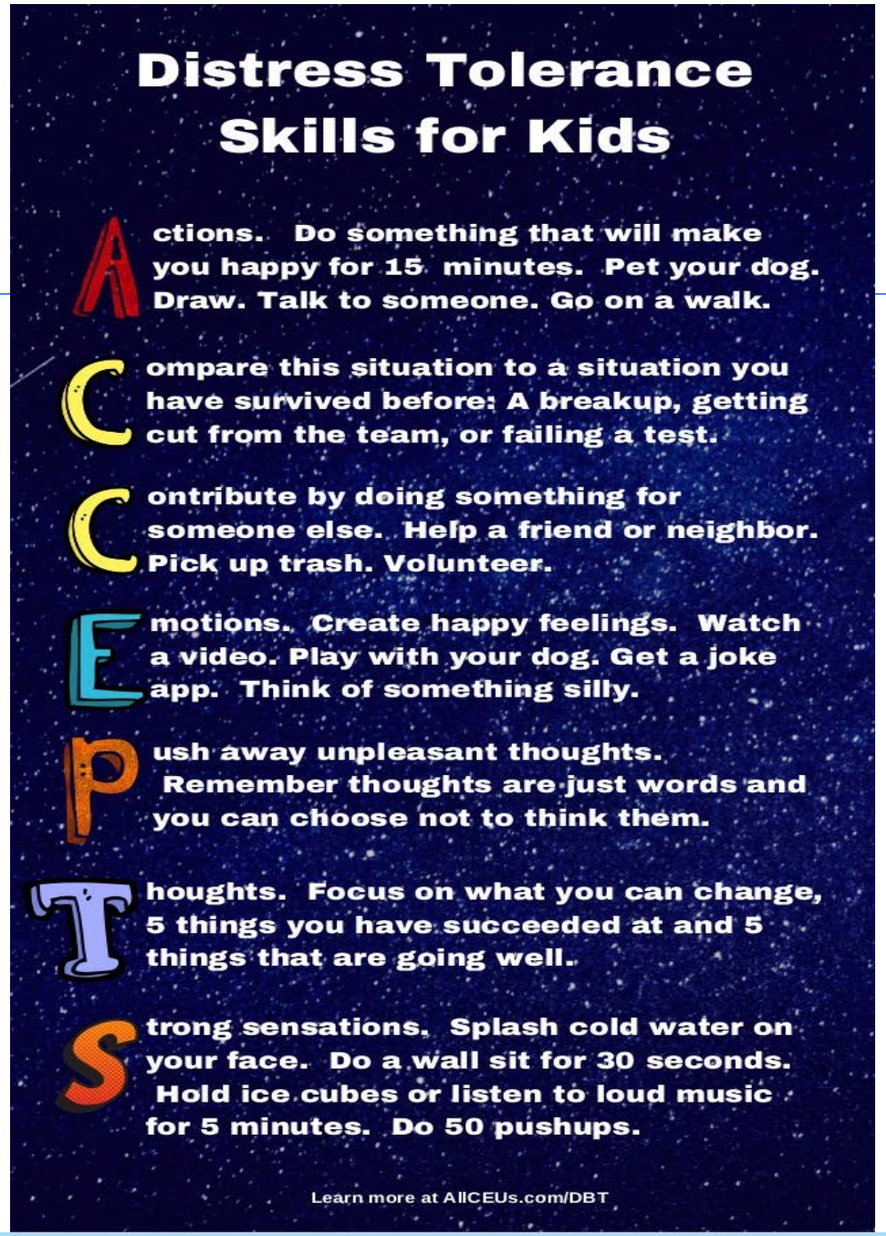
- “Parent time out” for exercise or a hobby
- Attend to your mental health
- Reliable media sources in moderation
- Build/Reach to a support network of family, neighbors, friends, other parents

A few more weeks of Summer…

- Keep kids engaged
- Especially given last academic year avail yourself of on-line resources-many are free
- Do not let routine slip
- Encourage exercise
- Read daily
- Reconnect in whatever way possible with peers

Routine


Structure the Day
Sleep
Reflect
Focus
Play
Exercise
Relax
Connect
from: Dan Seigel-Brainstorm


Distress Tolerance Skills for Kids
Actions. Do something that will make you happy for 15 minutes. Pet your dog. Draw. Talk to someone. Go on a walk.
Compare this situation to a situation you have survived before: A breakup, getting cut from the team, or failing a test.
Contribute by doing something for someone else. Help a friend or neighbor. Pick up trash. Volunteer.
Emotions. Create happy feelings. Watch a video. Play with your dog. Get a joke app. Think of something silly.
Push away unpleasant thoughts. Remember thoughts are just words and you can choose not to think them.
Thoughts. Focus on what you can change, 5 things you have succeeded at and 5 things that are going well.
Strong sensations. Splash cold water on your face. Do a wall sit for 30 seconds. Hold ice cubes or listen to loud music for 5 minutes. Do 50 pushups.
Learn more at AllCEUs.com/DBT

STOP SKILL
DBT DISTRESS TOLERANCE
S STOP
DON'T REACT.
STAY IN CONTROL.
T TAKE
A STEP BACK.
A DEEP BREATH.
DON'T ACT IMPULSIVELY.
O OBSERVE
WHAT ARE YOU FEELING OR THINKING?
WHAT ARE OTHERS SAYING OR DOING?
P PROCEED
MINDFULLY
THINK ABOUT YOUR GOALS & ACTIONS.
ADAPTED FROM DBT SKILLS TRAINING HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS, SECOND EDITION, BY MARSHA LINEHAN

Masks are Great to:

Role of Sleep

- One of the most important determinants of mental health
- Bidirectional
- Establish healthy patterns

Treatment should not be limited to (virtual) office visits

Things to do at home to promote resilience and help children thrive at this time:

- Altruism: There are scientifically benefits of helping. Children and families can take on a cause eg. 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. That takes the emphasis off of the child which can decrease anxiety and can lead to character growth.
- Family time: Meal time, a collaborative project together (for instance a puzzle) and continue to foment those bonds.
- Extra time with pets
- Organizing a child's room and reminding them of the toys they have and their gratitude for them
- Encouraging the development of a hobby
- Reading
- Listening to music/podcasts/audiobooks together; watching a family TV show or doing regular movie nights

How Grief Comes into Play during the Pandemic

- Developmental framework for how kids of different ages/stages conceptualize and understand death
- Isolation
- Challenge that funerals were different-children need immediate rituals
- Support groups-Good Grief-NJ based nonprofit
- Consider therapy and or medication

GOOD GRIEF

ABOUT PROGRAMS EDUCATION RESOURCES EVENTS

Dear Community,

As we all cope with the many changes in our lives responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand the challenges many are feeling in this time of uncertainty and social isolation. We are here to help.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will be providing information and resources to support the emotional needs of children, families, students, and communities navigating new life circumstances. At the same time, we will continue to remotely support families in our programs with innovative and adaptive resources.

Our primary goal is to help you build resilience during this time of uncertainty.

Latest COVID-19 Updates

Announcing New Webinars and Professional Development Training for Educators
August 13, 2020

Supporting Educators on the Road Back to School
August 4, 2020

Resources for Resilient Parenting: Practicing Family Care
July 14, 2020

VIEW ALL

Gg In the News

Coping with Grief is Harder During a Pandemic
NJTV News

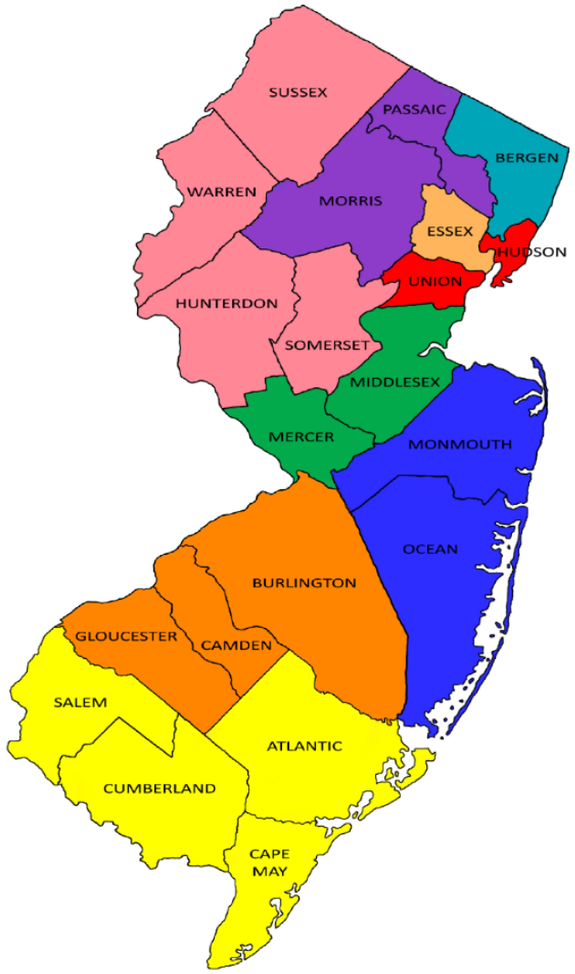
Kids are Grieving, Too
The New York Times

A Time to Mourn: Grieving Differently During the Pandemic

Summary

- Support kids by addressing social determinants of health
- Support kids psychologically by empowering families and recognizing the extra layer needed by those who have lost family members
- Support kids by ensuring they have access to psychiatry
- Support kids by addressing their transition back to school

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

PPC Hub Benefits

- A child and adolescent psychiatrist available for consultative support through the Child Psych. consult line
  - One-time evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist (CAP) at no charge to the patient when appropriate.
  - Assist the pediatrician with diagnostic clarification and medication consultation
- A license mental health professional to assist the patient/family in navigating the behavioral healthcare system.
  - Speak with a referred child's family regarding the child's mental health concerns and to assist in providing diagnostic clarification.
- Based on the recommendation of the CAP, the PPC Hub staff will work with the family to develop a 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.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

The New Jersey Child Collaborative Mental Health Program is at Risk:

Urge the Governor & Your Legislators to Save This Important Program!

https://njaap.org/take-action/

Take Action

THE NEW JERSEY CHILD COLLABORATIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM IS AT RISK:

URGE THE GOVERNOR & YOUR LEGISLATORS TO SAVE THIS IMPORTANT PROGRAM!

For five years, NJ pediatricians and other clinicians have had direct access to regional Hubs staffed with Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists (CAPs) and behavioral health teams to consult with about any patient's mental or behavioral health needs/concerns. Thanks to this program, hundreds of thousands of children have been screened, and approximately 11,000 children have received support.

The program's Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists have consulted with hundreds of pediatricians and other clinicians about patient concerns and offered initial and follow-up evaluations for their urgent patients at no-charge. The hubs' behavioral health staff have been available to answer questions, and have helped pediatricians, patients, and families by performing screenings, conducting intakes, and connecting children and adolescents with needed therapy and supports in their community.

We recently received notice from Governor Murphy's Administration that the program has been defunded due to the State budget crisis, and is now at risk of closing! If funding is not restored by September 30th, pediatricians and their patients will lose this valuable support. This is particularly disturbing at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented stress on children that are at greater risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

"Clink on the "Take Action" links to the right to tell Governor Murphy and the Legislature to SAVE the NEW JERSEY CHILD COLLABORATIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM".

Parent/Community Member Click Here To Take Action

Pediatrician/Clinician Click Here To Take Action

Telepsychiatry

- Access
- Insurance coverage
- Privacy
- Efficacy

Ask NJAAP or your PPC Hub about how to enroll

Resources

- Supporting Families During COVID-19 *(Child Mind Institute)*
- COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry *(AAP)*
- Resources for Helping Kids and Parents Cope Amidst COVID-19 *(AACAP)*
- Psychopharmacology Issues During COVID-19 *(AACAP)*
- Telepsychiatry and Your Child *(AACAP)*
- Resources For Resilient Parenting: Cultivating Emotion Regulation *(Good Grief)*
- COVID-19 Mental Health & Coping Resources *(Jefferson)*
- 6 Mindfulness and Meditation Apps for Kids *(Parents)*

Additional Resources

- Rutgers Helps Schools and Parents Prepare for Fall Hybrid and Remote Learning *(Rutgers)*
- Grades 10-12: Tips for Supporting Learning at Home *(Child Mind Institute)*
- Teenagers and Reopening *(Child Mind Institute)*
- Teaching Social Skills at Home *(Child Mind Institute)*
- Family Resources for Remote Learning *(Child Mind Institute)*
- Strategies for Supporting Learning at Home *(Child Mind Institute)*
- Return to School During COVID-19 *(Healthy Children)*
- Restart and Recovery Plan: The Road Back *(NJ Department of Education)*
- Pediatricians, Educators and Superintendents Urge a Safe Return to School This Fall (AAP)

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide Resources

SPTS University - free online training suicide prevention training for school staff

www.sptsuniversity.org

SPTS Website - many resources available for clinicians, school staff, parents and teens including COVID specific webinars/presentations

www.sptsusa.org

NAVIGATING BACK TO SCHOOL

TRAUMA INFORMED RETURN TO LEARN MODEL FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

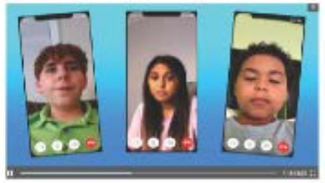
The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide has developed a **FREE** online learning experience to bring Trauma-Informed Care into the post-COVID-19 school environment.

Starting school this year will be a daunting prospect for every member of the school community. This online learning experience recognizes that challenge and provides simple, easy to apply information and activities to get everyone in the school on the same page, from educators, ancillary staff, parents, and students as young as kindergarten. Using a variety of training formats that include animation, video clips, interactive exercises and instructional content, these short modules will help set the tone for a school year where everyone is prepared to deal with the unexpected and keep their focus on the important educational mission of the school.

The focus of the learning experience includes:

- Recognizing the impact COVID-19 has had by acknowledging the changes and losses experienced by all members of the school community.
- Accepting that the foreseeable future will be one of uncertainty.
- Moving forward in this new learning climate with strategies that incorporate the principles of social-emotional learning.

All of the learning modules are available FREE of charge at the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide website: **sptsuniversity.org**



Middle School Video

SOCIETY for the PREVENTION of TEEN SUICIDE

NJ Health

TEAM KENTUCKY

CJFHC

The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide has developed this program and the accompanying material in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health; the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium; the Kentucky Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities; and the Olympia School District Education Foundation. Additional funding was provided to SPTS by Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield New Jersey and Wells Fargo.

Thank you! Questions?

Please contact:

NJAAP

Mental Health Collaborative

609-842-0014

mhc@njaap.org