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# STRIVING TO RAISE RESILIENT TEENS

Strategies to Maintain Anxiety, Stress and Depression

# STRIVING TO RAISE RESILIENT TEENS IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

- **Daughter, Mother, a child and adolescent psychotherapist, a parent coach, a researcher, a teacher and an author.**
- **Over 30 years experience in working with children, adolescents and families**
- **Author of LOCKDOWN: TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SCHOOL VIOLENCE is the first book to help educate parents/educators/mental health professionals to help raise confident, resilient children in this climate of FEAR AND ANXIETY.**
- **Our best defense is to focus on our needs to be able to show-up for our children.**
- **Raising resilient children must be woven into your day to day lives.**

# LOCKDOWN

- **We are in a state of Emotional and Psychological LOCKDOWN**
- **What does that mean?**
- **This is a new frontier - demanding that each of us show up!**
- **We don't have to be perfect but I do challenge you to do the work -**
  - **Who is going to join me tonight!**
  - **Get ready to be empowered**
  - **Gain greater understanding of what emotional and psychological traumas look like**
  - **Learn how to build your own TOOL Kit and**
  - **Help your child build their Tool Kit**

# LET'S START WITH YOU!

- **How are you really doing?**
- **Always start with your breath - Mindfulness**
- **Put YOUR Oxygen Mask on before you can help your family**
- **What are some of your self-care rituals?**
- **What brings you JOY?**
- **Be the role model you want your daughters to see**

# WORDS THAT AFFECT OUR MOOD

- **Stressed Out**
- **Anxious**
- **Fearful**
- **Dreading**
- **Hopelessness**
- **Fearful**
- **Depressed**
- **Discouraged**
- **Let's define terms**

# ANXIETY

- **ANXIETY**
- **is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes such as increased blood pressure, sweaty, tingling in your arms and legs, racing thoughts. - American Psychological Association**
- **An individual may experience recurring intrusive thoughts or worries.**
- **Anxiety manifests itself in many different ways.**
- **Our minds are smart - it will come up with creative ways to stop, avoid and lower feelings of anxiety.**
- **Strategies - their are "healthy" and "not so healthy" strategies**
- **One thing is for certain - your children know what you worry about as well as how you cope with it.**

# STRESS

- **Stress is a normal reaction to everyday pressures**
- **Physical and emotional symptoms of stress may include interrupted sleep, change in appetite, moodiness, anxiety, anger, feelings of depression and hopelessness**
- **According to the American Psychological Association - nearly half of all parents with children under age 18 report high levels of STRESS since Covid-19.**
- **Stress effects the entire Body. Muscles, Lungs, Heart, Nervous System, Male and Female reproductive system, stomach**
- **Does Stress look and feel different in children?**
- **YES**

# KIDS AND STRESS

- **Childhood stress can appear in any setting that requires the child to adapt or change**
- **Stress can be caused by positive or negative changes**
- **Excessive Stress impacts a child's feelings of SAFETY and SECURITY**
- **STRESSORS - pain, injury, illness, loss**
- **worrying about school grades**
- **social problems - bullying, kicked out of friend group**
- **physical changes in one's body**
- **financial pressure**
- **having negative thoughts about themselves**
- **parents going through illness or divorce**

# SIGNS OF UNRESOLVED STRESS IN KIDS

## **— PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**

- Headache, stomach aches**
- Change in Appetite**
- New or reoccurring bedwetting**
- Nightmares - disrupted sleep**
- Physical symptoms including stomach aches**

## **— EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS**

- anxiety**
- new or reoccurring fears - fear of dark, being alone in the house**
- anger, whining, irritability**
- inability to control emotions**
- stubborn or aggressive behavior**
- doesn't want to participate in school or family activities**
- reverting back to behaviors displayed when they were young**

# DEPRESSION

- **Lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities**
- **Weight change**
- **Change in sleep patterns**
- **Lack of energy**
- **Inability to concentrate**
- **Feelings of worthlessness**
- **Excessive guilt**
- **Recurrent thoughts of death and/or suicide**
  
- **Getting Help is Critical**
- **Easily treatable with therapy, cognitive behavioral techniques and/or medication**

# FEAR

- **is a powerful and complex emotion**
- **Brene Brown states “We’re all afraid. We just have to get to the point where we understand it doesn’t mean that we can’t also be brave.”**
- **is a distressing emotion caused by real or perceived impending danger, pain, distress**
- **we communicate Fear by our expressions, reactions, words and emotions**
- **What are some of your fears?**
- **How do you show them to your family?**

# COPING WITH ANXIETY

- **“We all have patterned ways of managing our day-to-day anxiety, and these patterns reflect the roles and expectations of our first families.” Brene Brown**
  - **How did you mom, your dad manage their anxiety?**
  - **Do you a person who manages stress by over-functioning? ex. cleaning, organizing, exercise, diet, scheduling**
  - **Do you shut down when feeling overwhelmed or stressed?**
    - **ex. waits to the last minute, forgets to sign children’s school papers**
  - **Do you feel like you are always in survival mode?**

# WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT RESILIENCE WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA

- **Trauma - according to the American Psychological Association is an emotional response to a terrible event, illness, accident. There is both a short term response to the trauma and often, a long-term challenges.**
  - **flashbacks**
  - **headaches**
  - **anxiety**
  - **physical symptoms**
  - **impaired relationships**
- **What is a traumatic event?**
- **We need to talk about Trauma when we examine the mental and emotional health of girls?**

# SPECIFIC TRAUMAS THAT AFFECT CHILDREN

- **Inherent Biases**
- **Judgements and expectations**
- **Sexual stereotypes**
- **Family expectations**
- **Parents need to acknowledge that these biases exist**
- **Create an open communication of acceptance to speak them**
- **This is how you help your daughter find and keep her voice!**



# WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOUR CHILD COMPLAINS - I HAVE A HEADACHE

## HOW DO I RESPOND TO MY ANXIOUS CHILD?

- **Common complaints include: headache, stomach ache, tingling in my body, heart racing, sweaty**
- **What to say to help your child understand what is happening in their body when they have physical symptoms:**
  - **(don't roll your eyes - here you go again, your always complaining)**
  - **Do you rush your child to the nearest Dr. or many specialists - reinforcing fear and danger OR**
  - **Do you calmly explain to them about the FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE - triggered when the Brain detects danger**
  - **Explain that it isn't dangerous for the body - it's the body's way of getting your attention**
  - **Body reacting to the Brain - the brain is signaling distress - danger**
  - **The Little Green Book story**

# BE THE ROLE MODEL

- **Be the Role Model - self-care, eating habits, alcohol, time on your devices, exercise**
  - **be mindful of how and when you talk about your fears about politics, covid, finance, etc**
  - **be mindful of what you are watching on TV**
- **LISTEN**
  - **learn to LISTEN to your child's words**
  - **be CURIOUS about what they are saying and feeling**
  - **manage your anxiety by not focusing on the WHAT IF'S**
  - **be PRESENT**

# 3 THINGS PARENTS TO DO

- **#1 Routines are Critical to helping children feel safe and responsible**
- Daily Routine - wake-up time, homework, exercise, chores, socialization, screen time limits
- Weekly Routine - include time to learn a new hobby, connect with family members
- Schedule time for FUN

# KIDS THRIVE WITH SCHEDULES AND ROUTINES

- Create Bedtime Rituals and Do Them Regularly
  - Bedtime stories
    - Baths - essential oils, bath salts
    - Morning Rituals
- FAMILY MEALS!!!!
- No devices, yours or theirs, at any of the above activities.

# #2 CONSEQUENCES

- How do we MOTIVATE children to respect and participate in routines?
- Rewards and Consequences
- Learning how CONSEQUENCES work starts with you!
- I empower you to set limits and deliver consequences if and when needed.
- Delayed gratification is a really, really good thing.
- A Necessary TOOL needed is Creating a Family Contract

# ACCOUNTABILITY IS KEY INGREDIENT = CONSEQUENCES

- Getting on top of screen time behavior is KEY to helping your child thrive.
- Key is to involve children in the discussion
- Sample Question. You: “How many hours a week do you think is a healthy amount of time on technology?”
  - Help them do the math. “If child spends 3 hours a weekday on their devices .....
  - Point out some of the behaviors you notice when they spend too much time on devices.
  - Share your experiences when you spend too much time on devices Teaching Time Management

# FAMILY MEETINGS -WEEKLY

- **Family meetings**
- **Be creative - bring supplies - paper, markers**
- **Invite participation**
- **Be mindful of everyone's needs and concerns**
- **Goal is build community within the family**
- **What is the family code?**
- **Moral values**
- **Ethical values**

# FAMILY CONTRACTS

- Set limits and deliver consequences works when you have a calm, clear and specific conversations with your child
- At your weekly family meeting discuss job descriptions in great detail, expectations.
- Include discussion of what the CONSEQUENCES of not doing a chore or getting off screens will be.
- Kids have lots of ideas. Listen to their thoughts, their feelings, negotiate and come up with a mutual agreed upon contract that both parties SIGN.
- If and when, someone does not do what they agreed upon, pull out the contract. Let it speak for itself.
- Revisit the contract often. Make it a living document.

# #3 SHOW THE LOVE

## — Breathe

- Children - babies, tweens and yes, even TEENS need love.
- Love - what is your families way of demonstrating caring and loving emotion?
- Get Curious - how do your children like to be loved?
- Respect that some children may need more personal space than other children
- How can you embrace them and still respect their boundaries?
- Reminder - talk to your kids about their right to set limits on who may touch them and when someone can touch them. Start this early and repeat throughout the years.
- Make time for cuddle time, hugs, etc. Be present! Be present!

# SCHEDULE TIME TO HAVE FUN

## — **Humor/ Laughter is the best remedy for mood related issues!**

- Dinner time, family walk - create time to talk to your kids
- Don't drill them with questions. "How are you feeling?" "Are you scared?" "Is your teacher teaching you?"
- STOP! BREATHE!
- Remember to be curious.  
Use "I" statements instead. "I heard kids tested positive for COVID. I am wondering if anyone in your school will test positive."
- STOP! BREATHE!
- LISTEN Be Present! If you are distracted, angry - revisit the conversation

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SCREEN TIME

## CONNECTION BETWEEN SCREEN TIME AND MENTAL/EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- Check out my latest my article on Psychology Today
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/family-and-trauma/202010/lets-talk-about-your-childs-technology-health?amp>



# WHAT KIDS ARE REALLY THINKING AND FEELING

- “Knock before you enter my room”
- “Respect my opinions - they may be different from yours.”
- “Don’t expect me to be your best friend.”
- “Thank me when I do something for you, before you tell how I did it wrong.”
- “I am scared and anxious too. I may just show it differently than you do.”
- “I may look like a big kid, but sometimes I just want life to be fun and easy.”
- “Acknowledge me. See me. Hear me

# WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- **Trust your gut**
- **Start with asking your child if they would like to talk to someone**
- **Talk to Pediatrician, school counselors, clergy for referrals**
- **These are tough times, building a supportive team helps**
- **Suicide Prevention Hotline 800-273-8255**

# COMMUNITY SERVICE

- **Involvement in things that are not centered around the child**
- **Charity**
- **Social Justice**
- **Volunteer**

# SELF-HELP TOOLKIT

- **Raising confident, resilient, kind children - they need help developing a TOOLKIT**
- **Toolkit -**
  - **a go to imaginary set of ideas, suggestions, actions**
  - **mindfulness techniques**
  - **breath work**
  - **calming phrases**
  - **selected music, videos or books that tend to calm**
  - **yoga poses**
  - **Apps such as CALM or HEADSPACE**
  - **journaling**
  - **friends/family to reach out to**

# OPEN COMMUNICATION

- **Talk about Taboo subject - politics, sexuality, self-harming**
- **Get curious**
- **Tell stories**
- **Share stories about when you**
- **Ask direct questions - are you vaping?**
  - **Are you self-harming?**

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- Twitter - @NancyKislin
- Author of Lockdown: Talking To Your Kids About School Violence