Supporting Family and Child Emotional Health During COVID-19
Department of Medicine Town Hall

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Presenter: Sandra Pimentel, PhD

Activity Title: Medicine Grand Rounds: Supporting Family and Child Emotional Health During COVID-19

Location: Zoom Conference

DISCLOSURES

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Course Director’s/Moderator’s
Dr Elizabeth Kitsis has no relevant financial relationships with an ACCME-defined commercial interest within the past 12 months.

Presenter’s
Dr Pimentel has no relevant financial relationships with an ACCME-defined commercial interest within the past 12 months.

OBJECTIVES

• Identify key strategies for discussing COVID-related stress and anxiety within families and youth across developmental levels

• Identify practical strategies and techniques for parent-focused well-being and self-care for managing stress, anger, guilt and other emotions

• Identify practical strategies and techniques to address youth behavioral disruption and concerns at home

• Identify specific resources for seeking additional support as needed
Fear, Panic
Anxiety, Worry
Sadness, Despair
Anger
Confusion
Dread
Powerlessness
Jealousy
Guilt, Shame
Grief
Joy, Pride
Awe, Inspiration
Gratitude

"Confronting our feelings and giving them appropriate expression always takes strength, not weakness."

Fred Rogers. Fotos International/Getty Images
What if I get my family sick?
I don’t know what to say to my partner/child/teen/parent?
I feel guilty that I’m at work…
I feel guilty that I’m at home and my colleagues are at work…
I don’t know how to parent my child…
Will my kids be permanently scarred from this?
I should be able to relax when I’m at home.
I feel bad when I lose it.
I can’t handle this.
I feel bad…giving in, being too loose…
I feel bad…setting a limit, giving a consequence…
I should be more productive when I am home
My child’s behavior is out of control
I feel horrible that my child can’t…graduate, see friends, play baseball, have prom, etc.
My mom is an ER doctor & I’m scared for her
Strategies

- Self-compassion & Self-Kindness
- Notice the feelings; VALIDATE the feeling
- Manage expectations (beliefs, perceptions)
- Focus on what you can control—Empowering ourselves & kids
- Self-care & stress management
  - Mindfulness, Breathing
- Structure, schedule, family routine
- Teach problem-solving; practice family problem solving
- Flexibility
- Self-compassion (in case you forgot); fire the self-critic
- Social support, connection, & asking for help
- It's okay to model ALL the feelings & how you cope; TOLERATE UNCERTAINTY
- You decide what information you let in (limit social media)! Manage messaging.
- Seek out joy, gratitude
- Play
- Yes to humor!
MANAGING COMMON SOURCES OF ANXIETY
For Montefiore Frontline Providers and Associates

"I'm feeling alone"
Collaborate/organize with other front-line workers. Don’t make difficult decisions alone. Ask and seek help, whether from peers or professionals. Especially when you feel afraid to do so. Build community with your coworkers and other frontline providers. Utilize available emotional support resources at Montefiore.

"What do I tell my kids and family?"
Reassure your children that you are a professional and have been trained to do this job while keeping safe. In a developmentally appropriate manner, tell your children what is going on, including your own feelings of fear/hope/sadness. Reassure them that we can focus on what is in our control.

"I am feeling scared"
This is so, so normal. Remember to treat yourself like you would treat someone you love very much— with heaps of self-compassion and love. Find ways to be kinder to yourself. Try to attend to the things that you can control (e.g., my resilience, eating well, my routine, following the latest information/advice for safety).

"No one is listening to me!"
Explicitly express your needs for reassurance, support, supplies, & PPE. Collectively ask for what you or your team will benefit from in this difficult time. Attend town halls, grand rounds, and other forums that allow you to express your voice.

"I don't have time for myself"
Taking care of ourselves is more important than ever - take breaks, practice mindfulness, get enough sleep, and eat well! Treat yourself as you would treat a loved one! Visit employee support centers in the hospital to get respite, lunch, and emotional supports.

Use resources
Emotional Support 7am-10pm, 7 days a week - 718-920-8844
Montefiore Emotional Support Allies (MESA)
Swift Montefiore Associate Referral Team (SMART) - mepa@montefiore.org

We deeply honor your work in this difficult time, and want to support you in providing care to our communities.
HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT CORONAVIRUS & COVID-19
For Montefiore Frontline Providers and Associates

General Principles
- Remain calm and reassuring
- Be available to listen & talk
- Provide honest and accurate information
- Monitor media exposure and help identify credible sources
- Teach everyday actions to avoid spreading germs
- Avoid blaming and stigmatizing language

How to Reduce Risk
- HANDS: Wash often
- ELBOW: Cough into it
- FACE: Don't touch it
- SPACE: 6ft distance
- HOME: Stay if you can

Elementary School
- Brief, simple facts
- Provide reassurance to manage fear
- Steps to stay healthy
- "Adults are working hard to keep you safe."

Upper Elementary & Early Middle School
- Distinguish fact from fiction and identify credible sources
- Discuss local, state, and national action
- Identify ways your child can help self and others stay safe

Upper Middle and High School
- Discuss issues with depth
- Engage in family decision making process

What is COVID-19?
- Disease caused by a new virus called the Coronavirus
- Virus has made many sick, but doctors and scientists think many people will be OK, especially children
- Common symptoms include fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath

Please call the confidential Montefiore emotional support line if you need additional support at this time: (718)-920-8844
Recognizing and Responding to your Child’s Anxiety

- For kids who do not verbalize feeling anxious, their anxiety may manifest through physical symptoms, for example, stomach aches or headaches.

- Parents can start by validating their child’s experience and reframing it in a more helpful way. Rather than tell kids they are fine, tell them that what they are feeling is anxiety and explain what that means.

Normalizing anxiety for a child can be helpful as well. For example, saying “a lot of people are feeling scared right now,” “it is okay to feel afraid sometimes,” or “sometimes I get worried too” can help your child acknowledge or recognize how they feel.

Coping Skills to Teach your Child

- Deep breathing: Drawing in air by expanding the belly can help your child relax and reduce heart rate, blood pressure and stress hormones.

- Mindfulness: Helping your child focus on what’s around them, what they see and hear, can help pull your child away from the anxiety and ground them in the present moment. Doing activities together (playing a game) that can bring their attention into the present moment is another way to practice.

- Coping statements: Teach your child to talk back to their worries - “Even though I’m scared, I can handle it.” “I’m stronger than my worries.”

- Coping ahead: Teach your child that when you have to do something that makes you nervous, it helps to plan in advance how to help yourself in the moment. If you can push through it, it will get easier!

- Acceptance: Help your child acknowledge discomfort without fighting it. Ignoring, judging, or avoiding the anxiety will likely make it grow bigger and more powerful. Teach them that everyone feels anxious at times, and that it is okay to feel anxious. You can feel anxious, and do things that are important to you anyway.

Parents Can Also...

- Set up a reward system to reward your child when they push through their anxiety. Rewards can be small things you know your child will enjoy, such as snacks, quality time with a parent, or household privileges.

- Make empathize and encourage statements - “I know that this is really hard for you, and I know you can do it.”

- Praise and compliment your child when you see your child push through their anxiety. Tell them when you see them coping well with stressors or actively using coping skills.

- Try not to let your child avoid what is making them anxious. Avoidance actually reinforces the anxiety. Instead, gently encourage your child to face their fears (use empathize and encourage!)!

- Ask your open-ended questions - “How are you feeling about...? (rather than, “Are you worried about...?”), to avoid suggesting that you expect them to be worried.

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Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Montefiore Medical Center

MANAGING
CHILD BEHAVIOR

For Montefiore Frontline Providers and Associates

With schools closed, parents working long hours, and families facing uncertainty, it is more important than ever to use consistent, **positive parenting** and healthy approaches to discipline in order to manage child behavior.

### Set a Daily Routine
Make a daily schedule for your children. Review the schedule with them daily and put it somewhere they can see each day. Make sure to include structured activities as well as breaks from schoolwork to relax, move around/exercise, and connect with others. Have dinner together as a family and maintain normal bedtime routines as much as possible.

### Schedule One-on-One Time
Set aside one-on-one time with your child as many days of the week as possible. It can be 15 minutes or less in which your child can pick a fun activity (play with blocks, color, read a book, dance to a song, cook a meal) to do with you. This is time a child gets your undivided positive attention. Don’t take away this time as a consequence for other behavior. This is your child’s daily vitamin for good behavior.

### Tip
Avoid physical punishment: The American Academy of Pediatrics reminds parents that spanking, hitting, and other forms of “corporal” punishment risks injury and isn’t effective in managing child behavior.

### Set Clear Expectations
Maintain existing house rules and make clear new expectations related to schoolwork and other activities. Review expectations on a daily basis, or as needed.

### Ignore Minor Misbehavior
As long as your child isn’t doing something dangerous and they are getting plenty of positive attention, ignoring bad/annoying behavior can be a very effective way of stopping that behavior. Make sure that when you ignore, you keep a neutral expression on your face and don’t say anything at all. As soon as your child returns to behavior you approve of, jump in and praise!

### Praise Good Behavior
Notice good behaviors and point them out to your children - this includes praising successes and attempts. Praising good behavior increases the chances that they will do that good behavior again, whether or not you instructed them to do it in the first place.

### Use Consistent Consequences
After giving one warning, use consistent consequences for misbehavior. Ensure that the consequence is delivered/stated in a calm, neutral tone. For younger children, use a brief time-out (5 minutes or less) in which they are removed from the situation and placed in a boring, safe place (e.g., facing a wall). For older children, give them a consequence that “fits the crime” and can be followed through (e.g., remove phone until they complete an extra chore). Once time-out or the consequence is completed, give your child a chance to do something good and praise them!

Please call the confidential Montefiore Emotional Support Line if you need additional support coping with parenting responsibilities at this time - 718-920-9844.
Helping Kids Cope with Grief & Loss
For Montefiore Frontline Providers and Associates

Grief is a normal reaction for children to have to the death of someone significant to them. When you’re thinking about how to share the news with your child, what to share with them, and how to support them through the loss, it might be helpful to review these steps:

Tell the Truth
Use concrete language. Share information in small amounts. Your child will ask you questions when they need to know more. It is okay to say, “I don’t know.” You can help them find the answer later.

Grief is Unique
Grief is unique for each child. They might feel sad, angry, afraid, guilty, numb, relieved, and might feel these emotions and others all at once or at different points in time after the death.

Grief is Not a Problem
Grief is not something to be fixed. It is important to welcome your child’s grief and be patient with it. Grief does not follow a specific timeline, and will continue to arise throughout your child’s life.

Listen to Your Child
Meet them where they are and try to understand their reactions. Don’t force their reactions to match your expectations of what grieving should look like.

Show Your Emotions
You can tell them how you are feeling, and show them healthy ways to cope with these emotions. Make sure to also leave room for their reactions, even when they are different from your own.

Honor Your Loved One
Discuss with your child and find ways to honor your loved one. The pandemic is preventing some rituals. You can describe what you might have done during a different time and explain what this means to you.

Please call the confidential Montefiore Emotional Support Line if you need additional support at this time - 718-920-8844
Creative models & resources

4 Jedi Mindfulness Tricks to Help an Anxious Child

"The Force is what gives a Jedi his power," says Obi-Wan Kenobi to Luke Skywalker. "It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."
Montefiore Resources for COVID-19

Call the **Montefiore Staff Emotional Support Line** to speak with a Montefiore behavioral health professional (psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists).

- 7 days a week, 8 AM to 10 PM
- **718-920-8844**

**In person Montefiore staff support centers** for refreshments, respite, and support at *Caregivers Support Centers* at Moses, CHAM, Weiler, and Wakefield.
- Hours: 8 AM to 8 PM at Moses campus and 11 AM to 5 PM at other locations.
- Open Monday to Friday

**Swift Montefiore Associate Referral Team (SMART):** Expedited referrals to Psychiatry for short-term treatment of colleagues with COVID-19 related distress.

**Swift Montefiore Associate Referral Team for Family Support (SMART-FAM):** Parenting support and/or family therapy with associates who may be experiencing distress in relation to parenting/family concerns with specialty trained child and adolescent psychologists, psychiatrists or social workers

**MEPA@montefiore.org**
Emotional Support Resources Pages: 1-page emotional support resources on common problems during COVID-19 (e.g., fear/anxiety, grief, moral distress, anger)

English: https://create.piktochart.com/output/45374386-montefiore-emotional-support-resources
Spanish https://create.piktochart.com/output/45631299-spanish-montefiore-emotional-support-resources

Call the Montefiore Relaxation Hotline to be guided through a relaxation method of your choice, including breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery (in English or Spanish).
718-920-CALM (2256)

Employee Assistance Programs
Employees covered by Empire BC/BS: Call 844-300-6072 (24/7 line) or email clientservice@carebridge.com.
1199 SEIU Employees: Member Assistance Program at 646-473-6900.

Be grateful for all that exists right now.

Thank you healthcare workers.

Notice the best part.

And don’t forget self-compassion!
YOU HAVE 48 HOURS TO REGISTER AND COMPLETE EVALUATION FORM FOR THIS ACTIVITY

PASSCODE for this RSS Activity Event is:

90TOIT

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