

CONNECTIONS

A weekly newsletter brought to you by

Kids Path

a service of AuthoraCare Collective

Emotional Regulation

Managing and Coping with Difficult Feelings

A journalist recently wrote, “Optimism isn’t about ignoring negative feelings. It’s about being hopeful about the future, even when the present seems wholly negative.” The columnist, Kristen Wong, goes on to say that the challenge is to be able to find a way to live with both the positive and negative emotions simultaneously.

“Optimism is about giving yourself permission to hope, even if you feel extremely anxious, unhappy or fearful. It’s not about ignoring your negative feelings about the crisis, but about finding a way to keep them from overwhelming you.”



It has now been over a month since schools closed and our state was put under a stay-at-home order. It is unclear when children will return to school and when we will be safe to be with others. Parents and guardians may have lost their jobs and others may be trying to work from home. Both parents and children may be struggling with homeschooling. Many children miss socializing with others in school and in activities. Adults and children miss not being able to celebrate milestones.

Dr. Helen Egger of the NYU Langone Health tells us that adults and children are likely to be “feeling stress and anxiety about the changes to their lives and the uncertainty during this global pandemic.” In this time of so much uncertainty in our lives, we may find our children as well as ourselves struggling with difficult feelings of fear, sadness, anger and anxiety. How do we maintain optimism and help our children with the losses they may be feeling?

Dr. Helen Egger tells us that, “most children are going to emerge from this situation and continue flourishing.” Dr. Egger tells us that the best thing parents can do for their children is to “create a safe, loving, calm home during these times.” Parents must find healthy ways to take care of themselves and cope with their own anxiety in order to help their children.

“Maintaining good mental health and a calm atmosphere creates a positive example for kids to attach to and learn how to cope with their own anxieties.”

Today’s issue of Kids Path Connections is designed around healthy ways to manage and cope with difficult feelings. Our Kids Path counselors hope you will find the information and various tools and strategies helpful as well as fun.

[Kristen Wong’s Column | How to Stay Optimistic During Coronavirus](#)

[Dr. Helen Egger’s Interview | Challenges Facing Kids During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Patti Gasparello

Patti Gasparello, MSW, LCSW
Director of Kids Path



CONNECTIONS

Children

ISSUE 4 | 5/1/2020

LEARNING RESOURCE

Calm Down Corner

Ever had a day when that spilled coffee is the absolute last straw, and you find yourself in tears or snapping at the person offering their assistance? On its own, the spill may not be a big deal, but after a day of disappointments and frustrations, this becomes the opportunity for all those feelings to come pouring out. You may be noticing this with your child right now, where small problems become opportunities to release big feelings, and this may be amplified by the increased sense of loss and uncertainty that many of us (kids too!) are experiencing during this time. [This Kids Path article](#) provides guidance on ways to support children during this time. As you implement this approach, you may find that a Calm Down Corner offers your child the space to release their big feelings so that they can move back into their thinking brain and approach problems from a place of calm. This article offers some helpful information about the science behind this technique as well as some practical tips for making this happen in your home.

[Click here to learn more about creating a Calm Down Corner.](#)



MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Ninja Focus

This week, we're sharing a Meditation App called "Ninja Focus: Kids' Mindfulness." This is a really cool app that allows you to select different activities based on your child's unique needs. There are different meditations available to help with emotional regulation, sleep, and mindful eating. There is music for sleep, focus and relaxation. They even offer yoga prompts for healthy movement. This app is currently free. The Android version allows you to access all of these activities for free for 90 days, and then switches into a monthly fee-based subscription. You can cancel at any time. The Apple version appears to have a free option with a priced upgrade.

[Click here to learn more and download the app.](#)

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Calming Sensory Activities

Our senses have a special way of carrying us back in time. We catch a whiff of chocolate chip cookies and we feel the warmth of our grandma's kitchen, or that song comes on and we are right back at our senior prom. Because our senses are so powerful, we can use sensory experiences to help ourselves regain feelings of peace and safety. When your child is out of sorts and caught in a cycle of off-track behavior, these calming sensory experiences can help them regain their emotional balance and shift back into the mental space that enables them to make good decisions. The following two activities offer ways to create calming sensory experiences for your child (both are adapted from author and therapist Paris Goodyear-Brown).



Magic Lotion Potion

For this activity, gather whatever lotions you can find around your home and a small lidded container. Together with your child, smell each of the lotions, and look for natural ways to connect the scents to special family memories; for example, “this pineapple lotion reminds me of our beach trip last summer,” or “this lemony scent smells just like Grandpa’s famous lemon bars.” Take time to recall these stories together; the sensory memories you share will add to the magic! Allow your child to combine their favorite lotions into the empty container and then decide together the best way to use the lotion, being open to your child’s ideas. They may enjoy getting a hand massage from you or they may want to use it on their own. You might decide to integrate this into your bedtime ritual, save the lotion for times when your child needs an extra dose of calm, or even add it to their Calm Down Corner.

Cool as a Cucumber

My daughter recently had one of those days where everything seemed to cause a meltdown—she had the wrong color bowl, she bumped her knee, she didn’t want to clean-up her toys... I could feel my own frustration rising and realized that we both needed a reset. I asked her if she would like to do something special, and she was on-board, ready to try “Cool as a Cucumber.” For this activity, invite your child to lay in a comfy spot and help them to create an environment that feels cozy and safe, covering them with a blanket or arranging their favorite stuffed animals by their side. Place cucumber slices on their eyes and add in other sensory experiences they might enjoy--soothing music, an aromatherapy diffuser, perhaps a hand massage with their magic lotion potion. The cucumber slices make this experience feel extra special while also limiting visual sensory information, which may feel overwhelming to your already-overwhelmed child. Feel free to adapt this to your child’s preferences and what you have at your house!

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Burlington | 914 Chapel Hill Rd, Burlington, NC 27215 | 336.532.0100

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CONNECTIONS

Tweens & Teens

ISSUE 4 | 5/1/2020

LEARNING RESOURCE

Using Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques to Cope with Emotions

Learning ways to cope with your emotions can help you deal with them as they “come and go.” You may notice that emotions come on suddenly or slowly and can feel like a wave. That wave of emotion can become more intense and then slowly or quickly change. Learning skills like mindfulness can help you ride the wave.

If you’ve never heard the word “mindfulness” before, you may be asking...what does it mean? Mindfulness means being in the present moment and paying attention to what is happening now without any kind of judgement of your thoughts, feelings, or body sensations. When you are mindful, you may notice feeling curious and calm. It’s also very natural to have thoughts that come and go, and when you practice mindfulness techniques, remind yourself the goal is not to get rid of your thoughts or feelings; instead, try to observe how you think and feel. Mindfulness is a “judgment-free zone!”

[This link explains more about the benefits of mindfulness and gives examples of how to practice.](#)

To cope with emotions, especially during times of grief and change, it’s important to take good care of yourself. [Here are some relaxation techniques and ideas that may help you in the moment.](#)



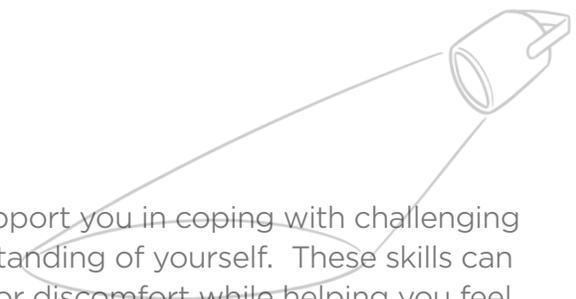
It may be helpful to first try out some of these techniques when you are feeling calm and safe. As these techniques become more familiar, try them when you do feel stressed, worried, or uncomfortable. Take time to notice how you feel after practicing mindfulness or relaxation techniques. And as always, feel free to use your own creativity and do what feels good to you. You can be your own expert!

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Smiling Mind App

AVAILABLE FOR ANY DEVICE | FREE | APPROPRIATE FOR ALL AGES

This mindfulness app is designed for tweens and teens and can support you in coping with challenging emotions, experiencing greater attention, and having more understanding of yourself. These skills can help you experience less stress, anxiety, sadness, depression, and/or discomfort while helping you feel greater self-esteem and control. There are great programs in the app that can guide you through social situations, school transitions, planning for your future, getting better sleep, training for sports, and many more. The Smiling Mind App now has a new program called “Thrive Inside” to provide more comfort while we are all spending more time at home. You can try out different programs to see which ones you like most. [Get the app here.](#)



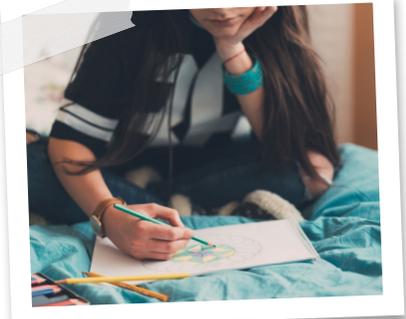
FAMILY ACTIVITY

Creating Your Own Calming Container

For this family activity, each person can create their own calming container. Your calming container can be used anytime you want to feel more relaxed or peaceful. Each person will need their own container which can be anything you have around your home, like an empty shoebox. Next, go around your home and collect items that remind you of the word “calm.” Consider adding any activities or items that can go inside the container to help you feel more comforted or relaxed. You can also write yourself reminders to place inside your container of any skills you use when you have intense feelings, or positive thoughts that inspire you.

Here are some ideas of what types of items could go in your Calming Container:

- Materials to draw, color, or write
- Something calming to smell (essential oil, body lotion, your favorite scent)
- Something calming to touch (stuffed animal, blanket, pillow, feather, stone, seashell)
- Something calming to hear (anything that can make a relaxing sound or create your own instrument)
- Something calming to see (photographs, postcards, meaningful objects)
- Something calming to taste (peppermint, hard candy, tea bag)
- A Journal
- A smiley face as a reminder to practice positive thinking
- Material for molding (clay or playdoh)
- Glitter calming jar (can be DIY, there are many recipes online)
- A stress ball (can be DIY)
- Deck of cards
- Your favorite book
- Artwork
- Helpful reminders of activities you enjoy (dance, sing, take a walk, listen to music, call a friend)



After you collect items for your calming container, you may decide to decorate the outside using supplies you have at home. The outside of your container may have magazine clippings, quotes, pictures, or drawings that remind you of feeling calm. During this activity, you may decide to share your ideas with your family members. This can be an opportunity to connect and learn new ways of self-soothing. After each person has made their own calming container, find a special place to keep yours so it's there when you need it.



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CONNECTIONS

Parents & Caregivers

ISSUE 4 | 5/1/2020

LEARNING RESOURCE

Reducing Stress and Anxiety for Better Mental Well-Being

We all know that tending our physical health is important for maintaining quality of life, and the same is true for our mental health! Tending our minds and building emotional resiliency doesn't necessarily come naturally. Just like maintaining physical health, mental well-being takes practice and requires strategies.

In this week's Learning Resource, we are sharing expert strategies and tools from the New York Office of Mental Health for reducing stress and anxiety while dealing with the challenges of COVID-19. In addition to general self-care tools, this site also addresses specific needs of parents with anxious children and the concerns of parents who are also caregivers for older adult family members.

When it comes to our mental and emotional well-being, practice may never make perfect, but practice can certainly make us more resilient, adaptable and better equipped to care for ourselves and our loved ones. Read the article below to help you keep your practice going:

[Click here to read the article](#)



MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Rick Hansen

Over the course of the last 30 years, Dr. Rick Hanson has taught and written extensively on "how we can use our minds to change our brains." His work focuses on honing the skills we need to nurture mental and emotional well-being, create true happiness and foster meaningful connection in our everyday lives. Together with his son Forrest, Dr. Hanson hosts the podcast Being Well which explores these tools and ideas through in-depth conversations.

[Listen to Rick's Podcast Here](#)

Dr. Hanson also has a website that is loaded with useful information; everything from straightforward everyday practices that promote well-being, to understanding the neuroscience of positive brain change.

[Visit Rick's Website](#)


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FAMILY ACTIVITY

Family Memory Box

When your family has been through an intense experience of loss or change, it can sometimes be helpful to share with each other about how that experience has felt. Sometimes loss can feel like a mixed experience of negative and positive, which can be a little confusing! As scientists study about how the brain works, one thing that has been learned is that we tend to have a “negativity bias.” In other words, we might only look for the negative aspects of a situation because our brain always wants to protect us from a threat. However, the positive psychology movement says that we can counter the negativity bias and teach our brains to integrate negative and positive experiences, leading us to feel more positive overall. We can make a practice of noticing something positive happening in our environment and fully enjoying that good thing, including the sense details of how it looks, sounds, smells, etc. For each positive experience that we notice, we can let the experience “sink in” fully. We can do the same with a negative emotion or experience by noticing all the details about it for a few moments and then intentionally noticing the positive aspects of that same experience.



The Family Memory Box is a way to share about important moments in your family history, especially the times that felt special because of being joyful together and feeling connected as a family. First, gather whatever creative supplies you have available in your home (such as magazines and glue sticks for collage, markers, or stickers) as well as a small empty box. This could be any kind of small box, even an empty cereal box or Kleenex box! Work together to decide how to decorate the box so that it becomes a container for special family memories.

Next, use small slips of paper to write or draw a happy memory, and place the slips in the box. Your family can add new memories to the box throughout the week, and each weekend you can pull a memory from the box and talk about it. Be sure to try to remember all the details of your five senses during that memory as well as any emotions during the moment. You may find that Memory Box sharing time becomes an important ritual every week!




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Kids Path Connections Resources

How to Explain COVID-19 to Children

- **Talking to Children about COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)**
<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid19>
- **Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus**
<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- **How to Talk To Your Kids about COVID-19**
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/kids-covid-19/art-20482508>
- **Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19**
[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Resources for Food and Other Assistance

- **Phone Call regarding resources/food:** Dial 211
- **United Way:** resources including regarding food, housing
Burlington, Greensboro, Orange Co.
- **Texting tool for students who are on free/reduced lunch for info:** Text FOODNC to 877-877

Emotional Health Resources

- **The Kellin Foundation – A Variety of Resources**
Builds resilient children, families, and adults through behavioral health services, victim advocacy, and community outreach.
<http://www.kellinfoundation.org/covid-19-resources.html>
- **Now's a Good Time to Teach Your Kids to Play on Their Own**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/parenting/kids-independent-play-coronavirus-quarantine.html>
- **If Your Kid Keeps Asking 'Why,' Give Them an Answer**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/parenting/kids-asking-questions-development.html>



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Formerly Hospice & Palliative Care Center of Alamance-Caswell & Hospice and Palliative Care of Greensboro

- **4 Ways to Help Your Anxious Kid**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/parenting/coronavirus-help-anxious-kid.html>
- **You and your Kids Can't Stand Each Other – Now What? – The New York Times**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/well/family/coronavirus-quarantine-conflict-family-meeting.html>
- **The Heartbreaking Reality of Parenting in the Coronavirus Pandemic**
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/parenting-social-distancing-coronavirus_n_5e6fb52ac5b6eab7793a0c4d
- **Guide to Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty**
https://www.psychologytools.com/assets/covid-19/guide_to_living_with_worry_and_anxiety_amidst_global_uncertainty_en-us.pdf
- **Teaching Our Kids (and Ourselves) Mindfulness to Get Us Through the Coronavirus Anxiety – The Washington Post**
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/03/20/teaching-our-kids-ourselves-mindfulness-get-us-through-cononavirus-anxiety/>

Educational Resources

- **Teachers Share Their Favorite Free Learning Websites and Apps for Kids**
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/free-online-learning-activities-for-kids_l_5e73848dc5b63c3b648bc968
- **Veteran Home-Schoolers Share Tips for Parents during Coronavirus Closures**
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/03/18/veteran-homeschoolers-share-tips-parents-during-coronavirus-school-closures/>
- **Khan Academy**
A nonprofit with the mission to provide a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere.
<https://www.khanacademy.org>
- **Scholastic Learn from Home**
Day-by-day projects to keep kids reading, thinking and growing
<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>
- **TED-Ed**
Free daily lessons, activities and challenges to support student, parents and teachers
<https://ed.ted.com/>
- **Duolingo**
The world's best way to learn a language
<https://www.duolingo.com/>

Fun Activities

- **18 At-Home Ideas to Keep Kids Busy and Entertained During the Coronavirus Outbreak**
<https://apple.news/A5MpYtgBZTfajPmUofqJ9Dg>
- **Video Games to Play with Your Kids That Won't Drive You Crazy**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/arts/video-games-kids-parents-covid-virus-coronavirus.html>

Activities to Remember Your Loved One

- **The Dougy Center**
The national center for grieving children and families
<https://www.dougy.org>

Behavioral Health

Mental Health, Bereavement Care, Substance Abuse, Suicide Intervention, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- **The Kellin Foundation – A Variety of Resources**
Builds resilient children, families, and adults through behavioral health services, victim advocacy, and community outreach
<http://www.kellinfoundation.org/covid-19-resources.html>
- **Alamance County Crisis Care: RHA Walk-In Crisis Center** (behavioral health and/or substance abuse)
 - Walk-in between 8 am and 3 pm M-W-F
 - “Crisis Hour” between 8am and 8pm Monday - Friday
 - Payment based on a sliding scale to those living in Alamance Co., no charge if unemployed
 - 2732 Anne Elizabeth Dr.
 - Burlington NC 27215
 - **336-229-5905**
 - 336-229-5906 - FAX #
- **Cardinal Innovations**
 - Includes 24 hr/7 day a week crisis and mobile crisis team
 - Only serves the following counties – Alamance, Caswell, Person, Orange and Chatham
 - **1-800-939-5911**
- **Open Door Clinic**
 - For those not eligible for Medicaid or stat funding
 - **336-570-9800**
- **AuthoraCare Collective and Kids Path**
 - Adult/Child Bereavement/Grief Counseling
 - **336-532-0100**
- **Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CDSA)**
 - Children under 3 years
 - 336-334-5601

- **Residential Treatment Services of Alamance**
 - Detoxification & Crisis Stabilization
 - Offers recovery programs that are invaluable to those struggling to overcome alcoholism, addiction and/or mental illness.
 - **336-227-7417**
- **Crisis Intervention Team**
 - If **911** is called, Alamance Co. does have law enforcement members trained to handle calls related to mental health or substance abuse.
 - Prefer that the above is used instead of CIT
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Also Veterans Crisis Line)**
 - **1-800-273-8255**
 - Call will begin with a recording, follow prompts
- **Suicide Prevention Lifeline Web chat**
 - <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat>
 - Texting option: text HOME to **741741** (Not a part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, but you are connected to qualified professionals who can help)
- **Mobile Crisis Team** (by phone or home visit)
 - Provided by Psychotherapeutic Services
 - 24-7, 365 days a year
 - **336-538-6990**
 - 336-538-6991 - FAX #
- **Mobile Crisis Services—other Counties**
 - **Caswell Co.**
 - Provided by Psychotherapeutic Services
 - 24-7, 365 days a year
 - **336-538-6990**
 - 336-538-6991 - FAX #
 - **Orange and Person Co.**
 - Freedom House
 - Offers residential recovery services for adults who are alcohol or drug addicted and those who are dually diagnosed with a mental illness
 - **1-877-967-8844**
 - **Durham Co.**
 - Alliance Behavioral Healthcare
 - Serves people in Durham, Wake, Cumberland and Johnston counties
 - Offers treatment and support for mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual/developmental disabilities
 - **1-800-510-9132**
 - Call will begin with a recording, follow prompts