

FOR PARENTS

Daily Life Coping Managing Stress-Anxiety with Children

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with COVID-19 or other stressful events calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Watch for behavior changes in your child

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and "acting out" behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Ways to support your children

- Talk to your child about the COVID-19 and their concerns.
- Answer questions in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. Even when schools are closed or virtual, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities. Try to keep bed times, school schedule, meals and hygiene routines the same. They help provide structure and routine when other things are in changing. This decreases anxiety and depression and increases children's sense of safety.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

**Gila River Health Care Behavioral Health School Counselors
(located in GRIC Community Schools)**

**Grhcschoolcounseling@grhc.org
520-796-2631**

GRHC.ORG/BHS