

Coffee with the Counselors

May 29, 2020



Meltdowns, Breakdowns, and Shutdowns

Dealing With Your Child's Stress During Virtual Learning

Tantrums vs. Meltdowns, Breakdowns, & Shutdowns

Tantrum

- manipulation
- knowing what they are doing
- a choice

Meltdown, Breakdown, & Shutdown

- being overwhelmed, having anxious feelings, or system is breaking down
- it is a message that they need something or one of their needs is not being met

Possible Current Stressors for Children and Youth

- Loss of activities and plans
- Isolation from friends
- Increased stress in the home
- Change of routines
- Uncertainty and lack of control
- Academic stress and pressure
- Restriction
- Family or friends sick
- Fear of someone getting sick
- Changes in emotions and motivation
- Loss of family members or someone they know
- Lack of access to normal ways of dealing with stress
- Increased responsibilities at home
- Being home alone or without adult
- COVID-19 Fears
- Loss of transitions and closure
- Loss of rights of passage
- Racial bias

There are a lot!

How Youth May Respond to Stress

**Not all youth respond in same way -- watch for changes in your child

- Excessive crying or irritation for younger students
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in pre-teens or teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school (saying they are doing work when they are not)
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain

What this could look like for younger students

Emotional or behavioral symptoms may include:

- Anxiety, worry
- Not able to relax
- New or recurring fears (fear of the dark or being alone, fear of strangers)
- Clinging, unwilling to let you out of sight
- Anger, crying, whining
- Not able to control emotions
- Aggressive or stubborn behavior
- Going back to behaviors present at a younger age
- Doesn't want to participate in family or school activities

Physical symptoms can include:

- Decreased appetite, other changes in eating habits
- Headache
- New or recurrent bedwetting
- Nightmares
- Sleep disturbances
- Upset stomach or vague stomach pain
- Other physical symptoms with no physical illness

What this could look like for middle school students

- Saying negative things about themselves, others, the world around them
- Headaches, stomachaches, physical pains
- Avoidance/ignoring challenges or problems
- Behavioral changes
- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- A change in school performance
- Difficulty sleeping or remaining asleep
- Mood swings (look for change in mood swings)

Creating Emotional and Physical Safety

How Parents Can Help Themselves:

- Notice your behavior
- Notice your child's behavior
- Change your mindset / Rethink your thoughts
- Pause & Plan

How Parents Can Help Their Children:

CONNECT

- Show affection
- Practice breathing techniques
- Use a feelings chart
- Cool down corner/area

CORRECT

- Talk about what to do with the feeling
- Give choices
- Roleplay
- Model
- Create structure/routine when possible

***HAVE REGULAR CHECK-IN TIMES!**

Ways to Counter Common Stressors During COVID-19

Stressors:

Isolation → identify opportunities to connect as family and with others

Restriction (physically and emotionally) → create spaces to move, get active, laugh, check in on emotions, etc..

Academics → listen to what your child is feeling, work with them to create systems and give support they may need

Lack of Control/Unknowns → create routines and clear expectations, focus on what you can control

Circles of Control

What I can and cannot control during COVID-19



Language That Connects

- Observation and Curiosity
 - “I have noticed..”(specific observable behavior)
 - “I am curious about..” “I wonder ...”
 - “I’m sensing that you are feeling overwhelmed by, is that true?”
 - “You mentioned that.. Can you tell me more about that”
- Validation and Reflection
 - Capturing what they just shared - “you don’t know what to do next”
- Being Real and Transparent
 - “I’m not sure what to do right now, but I will try my best to listen.”
 - “I’m sorry that I yelled at you earlier. I shouldn’t have done that. Maybe we could talk together about what we could do differently tomorrow to help our morning go more smoothly.”

Q&A

Click 'Raise Your Hand' in the Participants Box
or write a question in the chat to ask a question.

Please add to the chat any suggestions you have for the topic we should cover at
our next Coffee with the Counselors.

Thank you for joining us today!!