

PLANNING FOR UNCERTAINTY: HOW PANDEMIC ANXIETY IS DISRUPTING SCHOOL SYSTEMS

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NASP – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Local education agencies and individual schools planning for students and staff to return following COVID-19 closures must prioritize efforts to address social and emotional learning and mental and behavioral health needs. Equally important is ensuring staff feel their physical and mental health needs are supported. Districts should ensure all policies or recommendations are culturally sensitive and ensure equity and access for all youth.
- [COVID-19 Resource Center](#)



GLOBAL EDUCATION CRISIS

According to Unicef, coronavirus is the biggest global crisis for children since WWII with 91% of students worldwide having their education impacted!

Mental health was a crisis before the pandemic!



PANDEMIC ANXIETY

- Trauma leaves an indelible mark on each of us. When faced with a pandemic threat, our brains have activated systems designed to keep us safe. Even after the threat recedes, our nervous systems will remain on high alert. Our brains will stubbornly stick to the routines we've adopted over the last year because they have been so critical for survival.



WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen years and continue into adulthood.



RISK FACTORS

Trauma

Stress due to an illness

Stress buildup

Personality

Other mental health disorders

Having blood relatives with an anxiety disorder

Drugs or alcohol

**WORKING MOMS WHO ARE TRYING
TO HOMESCHOOL KIDS AND WORK**

DAY 1

DAY 5



digitalmamblog.com

QUOTES from Children and Teens



Future events -- “Is school going to be the same? Can I play sports, band, etc. this year?”

Imagined events -- “Am I going to get the virus? Am I infected? Can I spread it without knowing?”

Real environmental dangers -- “Will I be safe at school?”

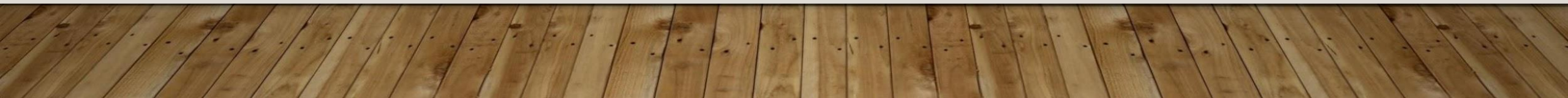
The unknown -- “Why is the world different? Am I behind in my learning? Am I going to fail? Will my friends still like me? Are my friends returning to school?”

If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far,

GO TOGETHER.

African Proverb

SYMPHONY OF LOVE
Photo by Niha Gill



RESEARCH IN POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

PERMA-V



- **Positive Emotions** - The right balance of heartfelt positivity to build our resilience.
- **Engagement** - The regular development of our strengths - those things that we are good at and enjoy doing.
- **Relationships** - The creation of authentic and energizing and supportive relationships.
- **Meaning** - A sense of being connected to something bigger than ourselves.
- **Achievement** - The self belief and ability to pursue and accomplish goals.
- **Vitality** - Eating right, moving regularly and sleeping deeply.

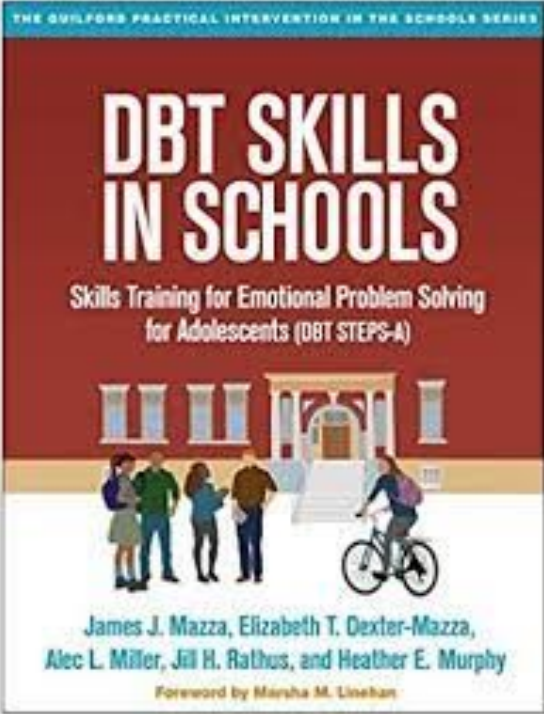
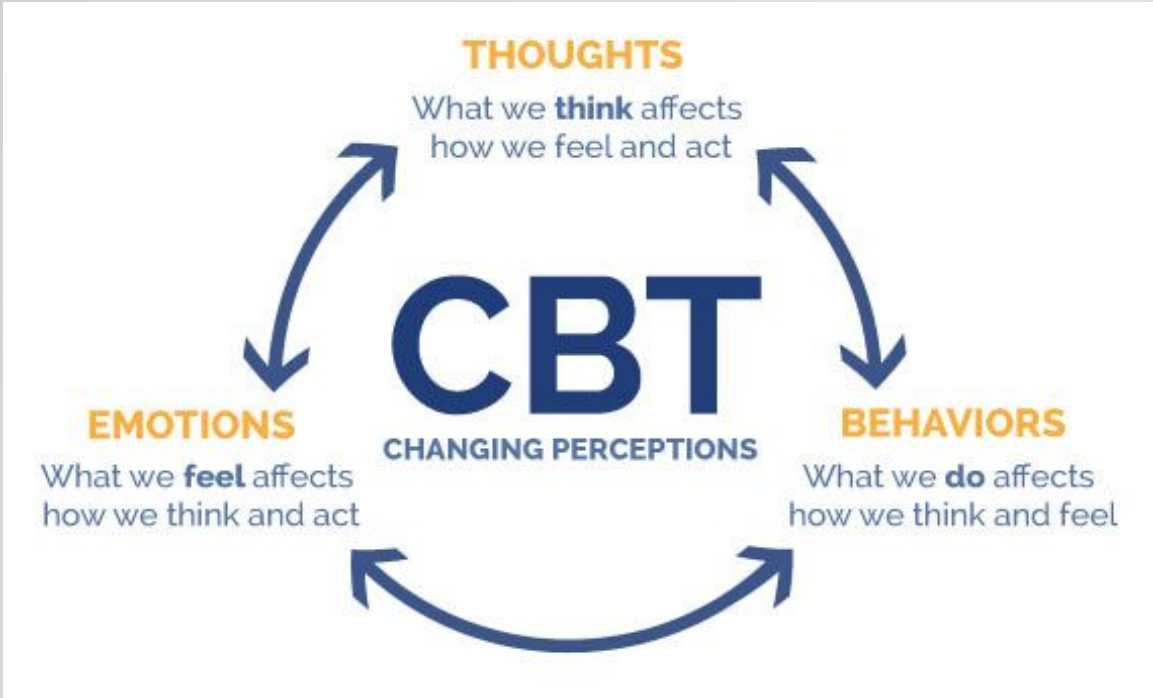
CBT IN SCHOOLS

When faced with adversity, our brain listens to what we say. For example, if your child is saying “I can’t do this. It’s too hard. I’m going to fail”, your child will activate a **Threat Response**.

If however he or she says, “This is hard and challenging but I can do this. I can figure it out”, their brain will activate a Challenge Response. Research has demonstrated that simply educating people on the stress responses helps them learn to activate the **Challenge Response** to stress.



TEACH DIRECT SKILLS TO MANAGE STRESS

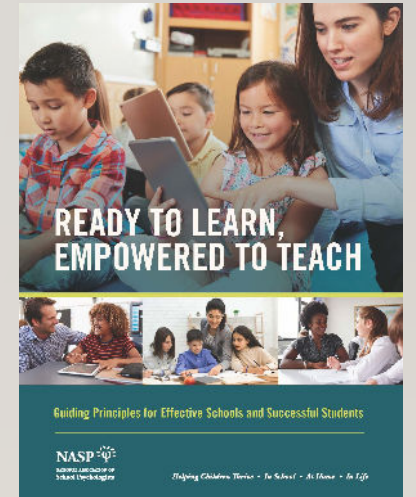


READY TO LEARN, EMPOWERED TO TEACH

Review, evaluate, and reconstruct or replace existing school structures, policies, and procedures that lead to inequitable outcomes.

Create positive school climates that balance physical and psychological safety for all students.

Provide access to comprehensive school-based mental and behavioral health services and ensure adequate staffing levels of appropriately trained school employed mental health professionals.



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- The American Rescue Plan (ARP) infuses \$123 billion into K-12 education, a critical opportunity for systemic SEL.
- Consider offering explicit online SEL or mental health education lessons or incorporate opportunities to practice SEL competencies within academic subject areas.



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

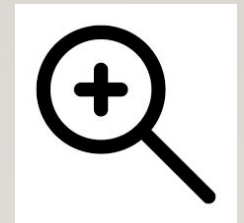
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES RIGHT NOW

DO NOT think about Catching Up, Retention, or Referrals to Special Education.

DO:

- Begin thoughtful planning for the fall of 2021 in order to mitigate and address the academic and emotional impacts of the health crisis.
- Create a response that is not business as usual. It must be extraordinary. Our children deserve no less.



WHAT WE KNOW WORKS

- Provide parents with the necessary support and resources to help navigate these unprecedented times.
- Tap into Community Resources.
- Consider **Special Populations**.



INSPIRED BY A PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES



COULD YOU PLEASE SHOVEL THE RAMP?

ALL THESE OTHER KIDS ARE WAITING TO USE THE STAIRS. WHEN I GET THROUGH SHOVELING THEM OFF, THEN I WILL CLEAR THE RAMP FOR YOU.

BUT IF YOU SHOVEL THE RAMP, WE CAN ALL GET IN!

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CLEARING A PATH
FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
CLEARS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE!

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS THRU UNCERTAIN TIMES – SPECIAL POPULATIONS

- Guidance from Groups

The infographic is titled "7 Strategies to Support Individuals with ASD through Uncertain Times". It features a header with logos for UNC, Autism Spectrum Services, CSESA, and The National Professional Development Center. Below the title is a circular diagram with seven colorful figures connected by lines. The main content is organized into two columns. The left column lists seven strategies, each with a circular icon: "Support understanding" (gears), "Offer opportunities for expression" (masks), "Prioritize coping and calming skills" (brain with lightning bolt), "Maintain routines" (circular arrows), "Build new routines" (house with arrow), "Foster connections (from a distance)" (three people), and "Be aware of changing behaviors" (curved arrow). The right column contains explanatory text. At the bottom, there are logos for UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and UNC FPG Child Development Institute Autism Team, along with a page number "2".

7 Strategies to Support Individuals with ASD through Uncertain Times

abstract language, an insistence on sameness, and a greater likelihood of anxiety and depression—all of which may be exasperated during this stressful period.

The following **7 support strategies** are designed to meet the unique needs of individuals with autism during this period of uncertainty. In addition, examples and ready-made resources are included to help caregivers implement these strategies quickly and easily. These materials purposely represent a variety of styles/designs/complexity to model the range of what may be most meaningful across ages and skills, and to demonstrate what can be generated with few materials by busy caregivers. Specific adaptations and additions may be necessary to best meet the varied needs of individual children and young adults.

These strategies are intended to be a menu or toolkit of ideas that may be helpful-- caregivers may take one idea at a time and find a way to make it work for their child(ren) with autism and their family. Caregivers may want to start with a strategy they have used in the past, or perhaps find a tool to address the issue that is creating the most immediate stress. Consider involving the individual with autism in the decision-making process about what tools would be most helpful.

Support understanding

Offer opportunities for expression

Prioritize coping and calming skills

Maintain routines

Build new routines

Foster connections (from a distance)

Be aware of changing behaviors

UNC FRANK PORTER GRAHAM CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

UNC FPG CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE AUTISM TEAM 2

GETTING BETTER TOGETHER

- Asking for help is the first step.
- Kids, teens, and parents are all struggling with the ‘new normal’ while trying to keep worries under control. You don’t have to do it alone.

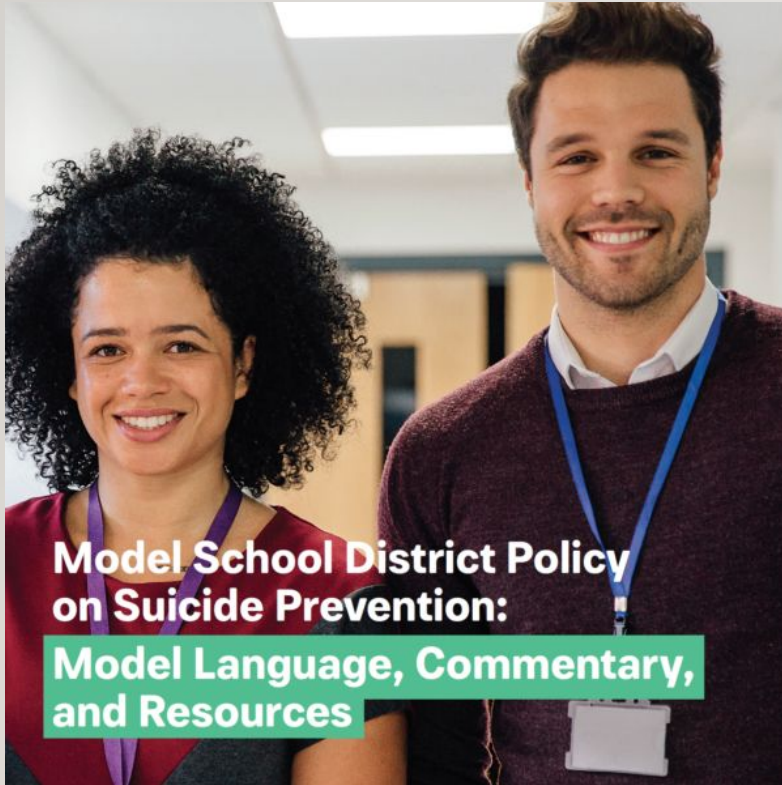
- Getting better — Together.



CHILD MIND[®]
INSTITUTE

Education

SUICIDE PREVENTION



A GUIDE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION IN NEW YORK SCHOOLS

PAUSE TO BE PRESENT



QUESTIONS? (OR BETTER YET ANSWERS FROM YOU)

- NO ONE has it all figured out (permission to not be perfect, but simply try your best)

“Empathy has no script. It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of 'You're not alone'.

Brené Brown

end of presentation

