

# YOUR KID'S NEW NORMAL



**St. Francis Episcopal School,  
Connections Series**

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# WELCOME!

Please, take a moment to give yourself a high-five and take credit for parenting through conditions that no one in history has experienced. The pandemic is still here, but it is no match for the strengths, love and grit that you drew upon to help your family through these last twelve months.

# EARLY PANDEMIC AND CHILDREN

## Benefits

- Smoother mornings
- No commute
- Less social anxiety
- More connection with family
- Time to play with pets
- Activities not possible during school

## Drawbacks

- Loss of structure/stability
- Decreased social interaction
- Uncertainty about the future
- Unsafe households
- No Extracurricular activities
- Loss of personal space
- Family conflict

# PANDEMIC AND CHILDREN... TODAY

- Peer/family comparisons
- Increased stress
- Health concerns
- Family conflict
- Screen dependence
- Difficulty articulating feelings
- With schools reopening and more social and recreational options available, your family is (again) faced with new flavors of uncertainty, choices and change.

# WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is never pleasant, but it is a normal part of life. Our brain is constantly processing information. When it experiences something concerning or extraordinary, our body tries to get our attention so we can respond to whatever is happening.

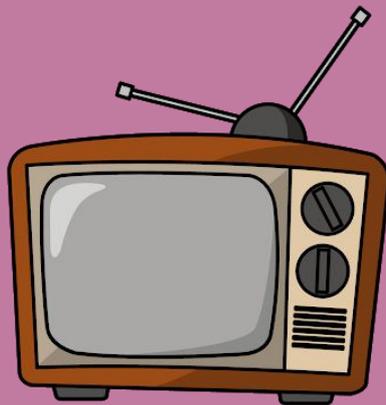
It can help to think about anxiety like an alarm. When a building or car alarm goes off, it triggers a response to keep things safe. Sometimes, though, alarms go off when they shouldn't – like when a car passes, a branch taps a window or wires send incorrect signals. Anxiety can be like that, too. Our children may need help if their fear or worry does not match the situation.

Having tools for supporting your child during their transition will help them develop positive mental health habits and may reduce your anxiety, too.

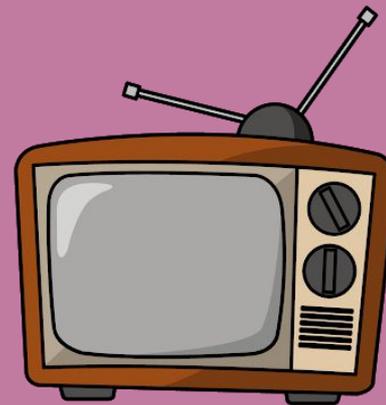
# TV CHANNELS



**Channel 1** - Past



**Channel 2** - Present



**Channel 3** - Future

# ANXIOUS BEHAVIORS-CHILDREN

- They are snapping at you (irritability, short fuse)
- Falling back into old habits and behaviors (regression)
- Temper tantrums
- Sleeping poorly
- Reduced appetite
- Head/stomach-aches
- Too much screen time
- Clingy behavior



# ANXIOUS BEHAVIORS - TEENS

## Teens \* Social Distancing \* Covid 19

### What parents may be seeing/hearing:

excessive screen time  
swearing  
defiance  
disrespect  
ignoring

complaining  
sneaking  
refusing  
fighting  
leaving

### What teens may be experiencing:

boredom  
helplessness  
lack of skills  
disconnection  
emotionally  
dis-regulated

fear  
worry  
confusion  
powerlessness  
misunderstanding  
worry about social status

Rather than focusing on the tip of the iceberg, problem solve  
with teens by addressing what is under the surface



[www.joyfulcourage.com](http://www.joyfulcourage.com)

# WHEN TO WORRY ABOUT WORRY (AND MOOD)

Worries or fears that interfere with normal daily activities. Persistent distress despite an adult's reassurances. Trouble sleeping at night or insisting on sleeping with parents.

**Avoidance:** Not speaking, reluctance to answer questions, episodes of or chronic absenteeism from school or peer activities.

**Somatic complaints – body reactions:** Physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach pain, that don't stem from other medical conditions.

**Sleep and eating difficulties:** Eating less or avoiding mealtimes.

**Excessive reassurance seeking:** Checking in about rules or due dates when your child typically remembers and follows them.

**Angry outbursts:** Hurtful or aggressive language or actions such as temper tantrums, arguments, fighting, physical violence or throwing things.

INTENSITY - HOW DEEP? DURATION - HOW LONG? FREQUENCY - HOW OFTEN?

# SADNESS VS. DEPRESSION

**Sadness** is a normal part of human existence, and right now, youth have a lot that may be making them feel sad. They may feel isolated from their friends, missing their normal routines, and worrying about whether things will ever go back to normal.

**Depression** Symptoms must interfere with the child's daily life. 5 of the following symptoms must be present:

- low mood or irritability
- loss of interest in friends and activities the child had previously enjoyed
- changes in appetite
- sleep disturbances
- loss of energy
- slow or agitated movements
- feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- decreased ability to concentrate
- thoughts of suicide or death



# IS IT DEPRESSION OR SCREEN DEPENDENCE?

Playing too many video games can make depression worse. Those who are addicted to gaming are twice as likely to be depressed as those who don't game. Excessive gaming can lead to dopamine exhaustion, emotional suppression, and lack of motivation, among other issues. No, tech isn't all bad, the unbalance occurs when teens begin to believe that they can get all of their needs met online. We do not want her children to isolate, or have difficulty engaging in real life relationships or to find it difficult to enjoy real life experiences.

## Warning Signs of Tech addiction-

1. Fails to complete homework,
2. lose sleep,
3. be irritable when unable to play,
4. give up other activities they once enjoyed,
5. use technology to cope with chronic fear, anxiety or stress,
6. lose friends or become isolated,
7. or skips school to play

Is your child addicted?

<https://www.healthygamer.gg/video-game-addiction/>

# MOTIVATION & TEENS

No amount of stress or sweat will make your teen work harder at school, in fact, the opposite may be true.

In a nutshell-We can't want it more than them.

Questions to work on with them-

1. Whats in it for them?
2. Let them have a say
3. Help Them to Remember
4. Embrace Natural Consequences
5. Seek Help

# 3 R'S OF REGULATION



## Regulate

Help your child **soothe** themselves. Make them feel calm, safe, and loved. If possible, sit with them and let them express the emotions that have naturally built up inside.

### Examples:

Rocking, holding, rubbing their back, taking deep breaths

## Relate

**Validate** their feelings with your words and tone of voice. Focus on connecting with your child.

### Examples:

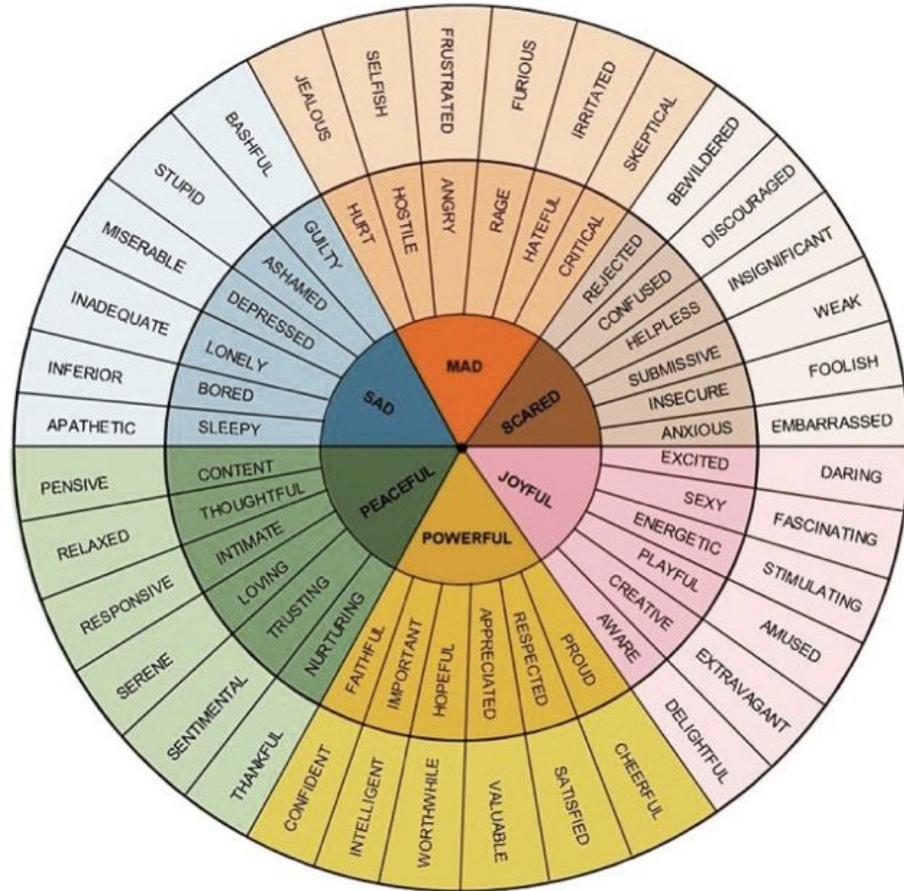
“This is very hard.”  
“You feel very angry”  
“You feel so frustrated”  
“That feels unfair”  
“You don’t want to do that right now”  
“You were having so much fun until you had to stop”

## Reason

**ONLY** reason when your child is calm. Now you can talk about alternatives and reinforce limits you set previously. Reassure them that you love them but the behavior is not ok.

Your child will not be able to reason with you if they are stuck in animal brain. They just don’t have the mental capacity for it.

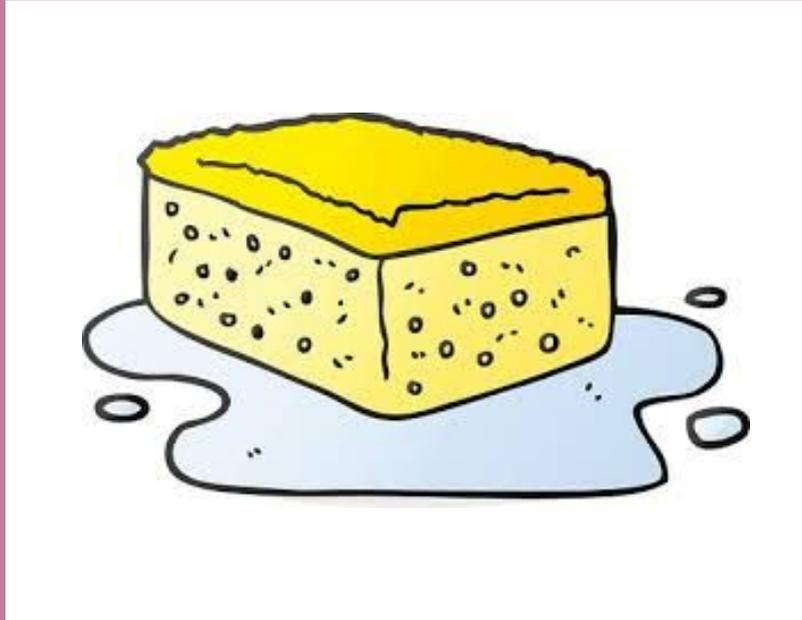
# EMOTIONS WHEEL



A feelings journal is a great way to help a younger child build an emotional vocabulary. It can be done in a few ways. Your child can identify his/her current emotions, draw a picture and label it, choose a feeling from a feeling poster or wheel to write and draw about or learn a new emotion to draw and write about. I've included an emotions wheel that I, like Goldilocks, love to find baby bear's juuuust the right word for what I am feeling.

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 1. Talk about your own experiences feeling anxious, nervous, scared, stressed.** For example, *“Wow, momma is feeling really nervous that we were going to be late for our doctor’s appointment. I can feel my heart beating fast! I’m remembering, though, that sometimes people are late and that the clinic staff are usually pretty forgiving about it.”*
- 2. Name your child’s feelings.** When you sense your child is feeling anxious, label their emotions for them and give them the chance to correct you and voice how they feel. For example, *“It seems like you’re feeling pretty worried about this game coming up. How would you describe it?”*
- 3. Validate your child’s feelings.** When you identify a time when they are feeling anxious, validate it. For example, *“It makes sense you would feel nervous about that! I might too!”*
- 4. Discuss that feeling anxious is not always a bad thing.** For example, *“It’s normal to feel anxious or nervous about stuff sometimes – it’s our body’s natural alarm system. Do you feel like it is going off too much for you to get stuff done or do things you want to do?”*



# CHECK INS WITH YOUR CHILD

**C** check in with your child. Invite them to share their feelings. Give them a chance to ask questions.

**A** acknowledge your child's feelings and normalize them.

**R** reassure your child that they can handle the situation. Help them regulate their anxieties and do calming activities together.

**E** empower your child.

# FAMILY MEETINGS

**Why?** Family meetings have several benefits.

- They enable family members to discuss problems before they escalate.
- They teach children how to negotiate, compromise, and express themselves.
- Because everyone's voice is heard and valued, family meetings can build children's self-esteem.
- Family meetings are an effective way to check in and see how everyone is doing.



# WAYS TO MANAGE ANXIETY IN THE MOMENT

**Breathing Exercises:** Belly Breathing.

**Movement:** Your mind and body typically respond positively to movement. If the situation allows for it, get yourself moving (extra credit for in nature). Engage in gentle activities like yoga, tai chi and stretching. I'd throw in dance parties if more your speed.

**Mindfulness:** When anxiety hits and you can't readily meditate, do whatever feels right to bring yourself into the present moment. Use 5-4-3-2-1. Channel 2- What's happening right now? Am I safe? Is there something I need to do right now? If not, make an "appointment" to check in with yourself later in the day to revisit your worries so those distant scenarios don't throw you off track

# PUT YOUR WORRIES ON A POST-IT!

SCHEDULE A TIME TO WORRY. YOU CAN ALWAYS  
COME BACK TO IT LATER.



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