CHILDREN & FAMILIES
COVID 19
WHAT CAN HELP?
RUTGERS ECHO PROJECT: CHERYL A. KENNEDY, MD NEW JERSEY MEDICAL SCHOOL
TIME OF COVID 19:::MAY 2020
OBJECTIVES

• IDENTIFY STRESSORS AND POTENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN OUR PATIENTS
• LEARN SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS THAT ARE MOST WORRYING
• LEARN TECHNIQUES AND THINGS CAN HELP MITIGATE STRESS AND ANXIETY
• PROVIDE HELPFUL RESOURCES
ESTABLISHING NEW LIFE-STYLES

WE’VE ALL HAD TO DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF DOING EVERYTHING AND RAMPED UP BEING:

• ROLE MODELS
• ESTABLISHING NEW ROUTINES
PITFALLS

• **AVOID TOO MUCH NEWS** FOR KIDS; ADULT MIGHT CRAVE UPDATES AFTER WORKING OR BEING BUSY EVERY DAY---CHILDREN SHOULD AVOID TOO MUCH NEWS & IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE AGE & DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL APPROPRIATE

• **WATCH THE NEWS WITH YOUR CHILD.** ASK THE CHILD WHAT HE/SHE HAS HEARD AND WHAT QUESTIONS HE/SHE MAY HAVE. **LISTEN...**
PITFALLS

• PROVIDE REASSURANCE REGARDING CHILDREN’S SAFETY IN SIMPLE WORDS, EMPHASIZING THAT YOU ARE GOING TO BE THERE TO KEEP HIM/HER SAFE.

• WATCH FOR SIGNS THAT THE NEWS MAY HAVE TRIGGERED FEARS OR ANXIETIES SUCH AS TROUBLE SLEEPING, PERSISTENT FEARS, BEDWETTING, CRYING, OR TALKING ABOUT BEING AFRAID
PITFALLS

CHILDREN WILL KEY EMOTIONAL STATES FROM ADULTS

• AVOID SHARING TOO MUCH EMOTION WITH CHILDREN (BUT, OF COURSE WE’RE WORRIED ABOUT GRANDMA & WE ARE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN TO HELP HER...)

• DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR OWN STRESS, SO YOUR KIDS CAN KNOW IT WORKS--- YOU BEING IN CONTROL, HELPS KIDS FEEL SAFE
PITFALLS

• PARENTS CAN FEEL MORE ‘IN CONTROL’ BY GETTING INVOLVED IN LOCAL SCHOOL DECISION MAKING AS NEW PLANS ARE BEING MADE

• SCHOOL OFFICIALS SHOULD KNOW HOW PARENTS FEEL AND THINK ABOUT SCHOOL SESSIONS

• SEEK PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE IF NEEDED (PCP)
DIFFERENT STAGES DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

• **PRE-SCHOOLERS**: Need reassurance for safety; involve them in learning hand-washing technique and surface wiping.

• **EARLY ELEMENTARY**: Brief, simple healthy info; reassurance that adults are keeping them safe; safety techniques.

• **MID-ELEM**: More questions: answer honestly & directly; help to learn facts & distinguish rumors and fantasy from fact.

• **TEEN—HIGH SCHOOLERS**: Refer them to reliable data sources engage in decision making and scheduling.
ADOLESCENTS & TEENS: HIGHER RISK

PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR TEEN IN FOLLOWING WAYS:

• **MONITOR IF STRESS** IS AFFECTING THEIR TEEN'S HEALTH, BEHAVIOR, THOUGHTS, OR FEELINGS

• **LISTEN CAREFULLY** TO TEENS AND WATCH FOR OVERLOADING; CHECK FOR SELF-HARM IF ISOLATING

• **LEARN, MODEL STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

• **SUPPORT INVOLVEMENT IN EXCERCISE AND OTHER PRO-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (ZOOM-ING WITH FRIENDS)**
FEAR AND ANXIETY

• A feelinG of being in Control can dissipate anxiety & fear

• Kids can be involved in understanding that Safety measures are a way to combat fear

• Make a game out of it; rules can change as family learns (Mini prizes for whomever wash hands together; whatever you can muster)

• Explain social distancing & why it is important—

• Practice wearing masks and staying apart at home to prepare for re-entry—

  Despite it being serious, we can make a game out of it for kids.
MENTAL HEALTH WORRIES

HIGHER RISK IF:

• PRIOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES; KIDS WITH DISABILITIES; OTHER RELATIVES THAT NEED CARE
• PRIOR TRAUMA
• FAMILY INSTABILITY
• LOSSES, NEW TRAUMA
• SOME WOMEN & CHILDREN HAVE BEEN TRAPPED IN ABUSIVE SITUATIONS
  (KNOW THE RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA THAT ARE HELPFUL; SEE RESOURCES)
MENTAL HEALTH WORRIES

- **PRE-SCHOOLERS**: REGRESS, THUMB-SUCKING; BED-WETTING, CLINGING, SLEEP PROBLEMS, FEAR OF DARK, APPETITE CHANGES, WITHDRAWAL
- **ELEM. AGE**: IRRITABILITY, AGGRESSIVENESS, SCHOOL AVOIDANCE, POOR CONCENTRATION, WITHDRAWAL, ISOLATION
- **ADOLESCENTS**: CHANGES IN SLEEPING & EATING, INCREASE IN CONFLICTS, PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS, UNMOTIVATED, DELINQUENCY, POOR CONCENTRATION.
GOOD FOR ALL OF US ALL THE TIME

• EXERCISE AND EAT A REGULAR GOOD DIET.

• HAVE A GOOD SLEEP ROUTINE AND GET ENOUGH SLEEP

• AVOID EXCESS CAFFEINE: CAN INCREASE FEELINGS OF ANXIETY AND AGITATION.

• AVOID DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE, INCLUDING TOBACCO: THESE ARE HEALTH-HARMFUL MALADAPTIVE COPING MECHANISMS.

• LEARN RELAXATION EXERCISES (ABDOMINAL BREATHING AND MUSCLE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES---GO TO THE INTERNET...
NEW SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

• DEVELOP ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING SKILLS. FOR EXAMPLE, STATE FEELINGS IN POLITE, FIRM, AND NOT OVERLY AGGRESSIVE OR PASSIVE WAYS: ("I FEEL ANGRY WHEN YOU YELL AT ME." "PLEASE STOP YELLING." “PLEASE MOVE FARTHER AWAY FROM ME FOR SAFETY)

• REHEARSE AND PRACTICE SITUATIONS WHICH CAUSE STRESS. ONE EXAMPLE IS TO PRACTICE SAFETY SKILLS WITH KIDS: WEARING A MASK; WASHING HANDS; COUGHING INTO ELBOWS, CLEANING SURFACES

• LEARN PRACTICAL COPING SKILLS. FOR EXAMPLE, BREAK A LARGE TASK INTO SMALLER, MORE ATTAINABLE TASKS. DECREASE NEGATIVE SELF-TALK: CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS - WITH ALTERNATIVE, NEUTRAL, OR POSITIVE IDEAS: INVOLVE THE KIDS IN PROBLEM SOLVING & DECISIONS AS APPROPRIATE
NEW SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

• GIVE YOURSELF, YOUR PARTNER AND CHILDREN A BREAK

• FIGURE OUT SOMETHING FUN!!

• THIS IS HARD FOR EVERYONE; EVERYONE CANNOT BE AS STRUCTURED AS WE WISH; DEVELOP TOLERANCE

• BE POLITE; BE KIND AND TEACH CHILDREN AND OTHERS HOW TO BE POSITIVE AND PROBLEM SOLVE; DEVELOP RESILIENCE

• RE-INFORCE NON-VIOLENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION TECHNIQUES (LESS STRESS THAN CONFLICT!!)
RESOURCES

• FOOD BANKS:
  HTTPS://WWW.NEEDHELPPAYINGBILLS.COM/HTML/NEWARK_FOOD_BANKS_AND_PANTRIES.HTML

TIPS FOR FAMILIES: HTTPS://WWW.CHILDCARENJ.GOV/CHILD-CARE-FOR-COVID-19/ESSEX
(CHANGE COUNTY TO SUIT)

• HTTPS://WWW.NJ.GOV/DCF/CORONAVIRUS_FAMILIES_YOUTH.HTML

• VISIT THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE EXTERNAL ICON OR CALL 1-800-799-7233 AND TTY 1-800-787-3224; HTTPS://WWW.WOMENSHELTERS.ORG/CO/NJ-ESSEX
RESOURCES

- HTTPS://WWW.NJ.GOV/DCF/CORONAVIRUS.HTML

- ARC RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES WITH MEMBERS WITH DISABILITIES
  :HTTPS://THEARC.ORG/COVID/?UTM_SOURCE=CC&UTM_MEDIUM=EMAIL&UTM_CAMPaign=FUSION

- CALM.COM

- THERE ARE LOTS OF KID-FRIENDLY CARTOONS FOR KIDS ABOUT COVID 19 ON INTERNET

- VIDEO: HTTPS://DRIVE.GOOGLE.COM/FILE/D/1_Y56F-6SDPB4HSEIUOVYHDF_LA_BC488/VIEW