

Are you concerned about your child's mental health during COVID-19 and virtual learning?



The pandemic has been hard on a lot of families. It has taken away some of the security and consistency we experienced in the world pre-COVID. As adults, we have the ability to use higher level thinking to help us realistically look at situations, understand what is in our control, and then make well-thought out decisions. For children whose brains are not fully developed until their mid-20s, this does not happen as seamlessly. Experiencing 'hard' feelings (e.g. anxiety, sadness, anger, etc.) for a period of time may result in concerns for emotional health. If your child is experiencing any of the following signs, please consult your family doctor, pediatrician, or contact your school counselor for more resources. (Contact information on the reverse.)

- Have lost interest in things that they used to enjoy
- Have low energy
- Sleep too much or too little, or seem sleepy throughout the day
- Are spending more and more time alone, and avoid social activities with friends or family (isolating)
- Fear gaining weight, or diet or exercise excessively
- Engage in self-harm behaviors (e.g., cutting, burning)
- Smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs
- Engage in risky or destructive behavior alone or with friends
- Have thoughts of suicide
- Have periods of highly elevated energy and activity, and require much less sleep than usual
- Say that they think someone is trying to control their mind or that they hear things that other people cannot hear
- Sudden changes in mood unexpectedly (usually sad, but all of a sudden happy or vice versa)
- High achieving students are also at risk, even though they may appear to be keeping it all together

You know your child better than anyone - you are their best advocate. If you feel something is not right (even if it's not on the list above) please reach out to discuss your concerns. Any sudden changes in mood or behavior can indicate that something deeper is going on.

Often a barrier to receiving help can be the stigma that comes along with mental health. Struggling with mental health does not mean that you (or your child) are doing anything "wrong", it does not mean that anything needs to be fixed. It does mean that conversations need to take place to get the proper help. If you have a broken bone you go to the doctor and all the necessary specialists to get help. You are not looked at any differently for having a broken bone and getting help with it. Mental health should be looked at in the same light.



If your child is a high achieving student, please do not assume that everything is ok. Have a conversation with them. Many times high achieving students do not want to "burden" their parents with their fears or problems. They are usually insightful enough to know that their parents have adult problems, and do not want to add to them. Please make sure to reassure your child that they are your priority and encourage open conversations

Open communication between you and your child is key, make sure you are checking on them and having those conversations. If you're not sure where to start - your School Counselor can help you find a way. Conversations about mental health can be hard and awkward - but they are important and can be life saving. All information shared with your School Counselor is confidential and does not go on your child's record. In the event that confidentiality needs to be broken, your School Counselor will discuss the reasons with you prior to any confidential information being shared.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health. (2020). Child and adolescent mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>

School Counseling Contacts

Elementary - Danielle Mikesell-Redding, PhD, NCC, LPC
mikesellD@fairfield.k12.pa.us
717-642-2020

Middle School - Cheryl Sornson, M. Ed., NCC, LPC
sornsonc@fairfield.k12.pa.us
717-642-2023

High School - Kristina Harvey, M. Ed., NCC
harveyk@fairfield.k12.pa.us
717-642-2078

Thank you Dani Mikesell-Redding for allowing me to adapt this for High School families!