



HANCOCK COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

18333 HWY 603 KILN MS 39556
OFFICE: 228-255-0942 • FAX: 228-255-9456



Brian T. Adam,
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Manage Anxiety & Stress

Stress and Coping

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include

- **Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19**
- **Children and teens**
- **People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders**
- **People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use**

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Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include

- **Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones**
- **Changes in sleep or eating patterns**
- **Difficulty sleeping or concentrating**
- **Worsening of chronic health problems**
- **Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs**

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSAexternal icon](#)) website.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

For parents

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include

- **Excessive crying or irritation in younger children**
- **Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)**
- **Excessive worry or sadness**
- **Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits**
- **Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens**
- **Poor school performance or avoiding school**
- **Difficulty with attention and concentration**
- **Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past**
- **Unexplained headaches or body pain**
- **Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs**



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There are many things you can do to support your child

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Thank you;

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Brian T. Adam'.

Brian T. Adam
EMA Director

Helping Children Cope During and After a Disaster

A Resource for Parents and Caregivers

The amount of damage caused from a disaster can be overwhelming. The destruction of homes and separation from school, family, and friends can create a great amount of stress and anxiety for children. They may not fully understand what is going on. A child's reaction and signs of stress may vary depending on age and previous experiences and typical coping behavior with stress.

What You Can Do to Help Children Cope with a Disaster

Set a good example by managing your own stress through healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating healthy, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, and avoiding drugs and alcohol. When you are prepared, rested, and relaxed, you can respond better to unexpected events and can make decisions in the best interest of your loved ones.



The following tips can help reduce stress before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.

Before

- Assure your children that you are prepared to keep them safe.
- Review safety plans before a disaster or emergency happens. Having a plan will increase your children's confidence and help give them a sense of control.

During

- Stay calm and reassure your children.
- Talk to your children about what is happening in a way that they can understand. Keep it simple and appropriate for each child's age.

After

- Give your children opportunities to talk about what they went through. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
- Encourage your children to take action directly related to the disaster so they feel a sense of control. For example, children can help others after a disaster, such as volunteering to help community or family members in a safe environment. Children should NOT participate in disaster cleanup activities for health and safety reasons.
- Because parents, teachers, and other adults see children in different situations, it is important for them to work together to share information about how each child is coping after a traumatic event.
- Help your children to have a sense of structure, which can make them feel more at ease or provide a sense of familiarity. Once schools and child care opens again, help them return to their regular activities.

Common Reactions

The common reactions to distress will fade over time for most children. Children who were directly exposed to a disaster can become upset again and behavior related to the event may return if they see or hear reminders.

If children continue to be very upset or if their reactions hurt their relationships or schoolwork, parents may want to talk to a professional or have their children to talk to someone who specializes in children's emotional needs.

Learn more about common reactions to distress below:



For Infants to 2-Year-Olds

Infants may become more cranky. They may cry more than usual or want to be held and cuddled more.



For 3 to 6-Year-Olds

They may have toileting accidents, bed-wetting, tantrums and a hard time sleeping, or be frightened about being separated from their parents/caregivers.



For 7 to 10-Year-Olds

Older children may feel sad, mad, or afraid that the event will happen again. Correct misinformation the child may get from others.



For Preteens and Teenagers

Some preteens and teenagers respond to trauma by acting out or feeling afraid to leave the home. Their overwhelming emotions may lead to increased arguing and even fighting with siblings, parents/caregivers or other adults.



For Special Needs Children

Children with physical, emotional, or intellectual limitations may have stronger reactions to a threatened or actual disaster. Children with special needs may need extra words of reassurance, more explanations about the event, and more comfort and other positive physical contact such as hugs from loved ones.

Want to learn more?

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/index.html>