

Counseling Connections

Message from Your School Social Worker

There has been so much change this past month that our world has literally been turned upside down! A common theme in our conversations with students and families is the impact all this change has had on our mental wellbeing, and how difficult it's been to find a sense of normalcy.

Since the stay-at-home orders were put into place in March many events and celebrations have been canceled, there have been weeks waiting in anticipation for what may come, and many have lost hope for the future events they dreamed of having.

We're feeling it as adults, and our children are also having similar feelings. The biggest difference between adults and children is the way the emotions are processed and expressed. With this in mind, we want to provide you with insight and resources on some of the ways your student may be coping with these changes.

Please reach out to Mrs. Proctor if you have additional questions or concerns. Karen.proctor@AmitaHealth.org.

Feeling the Change

IT'S OK TO FEEL:



EVERYBODY FEELS THAT WAY SOMETIMES.
WE DON'T LIKE IT, BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE US WEAK. IT MAKES US
HUMAN.
AND IT HELPS TO TALK ABOUT IT.

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What Can You Do To Help

Keep in mind that your student doesn't have the life experience you do as an adult. They may be experiencing more intense emotions about all of these changes but may not be equipped with the skills to express their emotions.

Take time to talk with your student and use effective listening to help validate their feelings.

Use phrases like: "I can't imagine...", "It sounds like it's been really difficult", "I agree, this really stinks", and "Tell me about...".

- Help them feel less lonely and normalize these feelings for both you and your student. Children often have a lot of questions about the world. This is especially true now! Be open and honest with them and communicate the facts to them at a level they can understand.
- Help them stay focused on what they can control. Stay focused on what's important now, and plan for future goals they can accomplish in the upcoming year.
- Brainstorm ways for them to have experiences or celebrations they've lost once the stay-at-home orders are lifted.
- Make sure they're staying active and connected socially. It's recommended that teens talk with someone outside of their immediate family at least 3 times a week.

Check out these informational videos for more ideas on ways to talk with your student. <https://thevillage.org/covid-19-resources/>

When to Get Professional Help

Although sadness is normal, it's important to recognize signs that may indicate professional help is needed. If you notice any of signs of **persistent sadness, isolation hopelessness or worry** that continue **over 2 weeks** please contact a mental health professional or your local hospital.

Where to Get Help

Your School Social Worker or your Physician
Illinois Suicide Prevention Hotline - Text "Talk" to 552020
National Crisis Hotline - Text "Home" to 741741
AMITA Behavioral Health Services 855-383-2224