

# Coping with Uncertainty and Loss: What We Can Do to Help Our Kids and Ourselves (part 2)

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9-25-20



# Objectives

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- What we've learned since the start of school
- What research says about how to approach adjustment back to school in times of recent trauma and loss
- How parents can support themselves (mental health & self care)
- How parents can support their children (focus on what you can control, coping, & flexibility)
- What professionals can do

# What kids & parents are saying about returning to school during COVID

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- Kids:
  - My whole life has been cancelled
  - They won't let me talk to my friends & it doesn't make sense
  - This will never end
- Parents:
  - I can't be a teacher, parent, and employee all at the same time
  - I'm worried my child is not getting a good education this way
  - This will never end



**The Washington Post**

On Parenting • Perspective

# This is our season of coaching our children through disappointment



By Kristen Howerton  
August 20, 2020 at 9:00  
a.m. EDT

# What our kids need to hear right now

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“We need to give our kids hope. We need to help them see this as a *temporary season*, to give them some sense that their world, while being profoundly changed, will not be forever marred.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/08/20/this-is-our-season-coaching-our-children-through-disappointment/>



# The unexpected

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- While preparing for what we thought was the most likely tragedies and losses our community would experience, instead new unexpected losses have occurred.
- Loss of HS student and longtime plant manager

# What we know from past experience

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- Although there's no roadmap for what the community is coping with we do have research on children's adjustment after past events such as natural disasters (earthquakes & tornadoes) and school shootings. Events that happen without warning or possibility to prepare
- Kids are more likely to experience anxiety, withdrawal & behavior issues
- The silver lining....the research shows what interventions were done and that kids do get better usually within 6 months and when we focus on their social emotional needs (SEL)



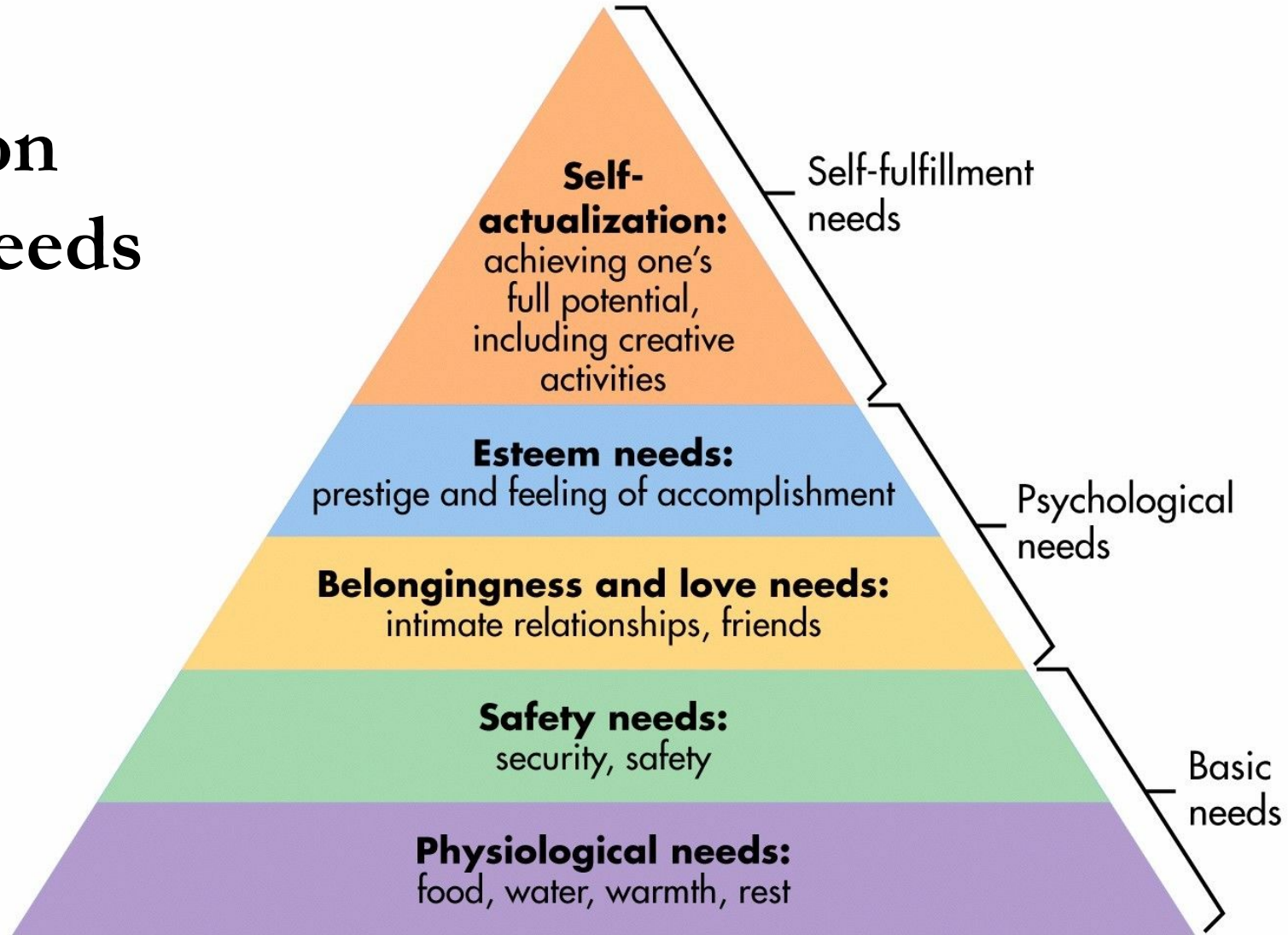
# What can parents do?

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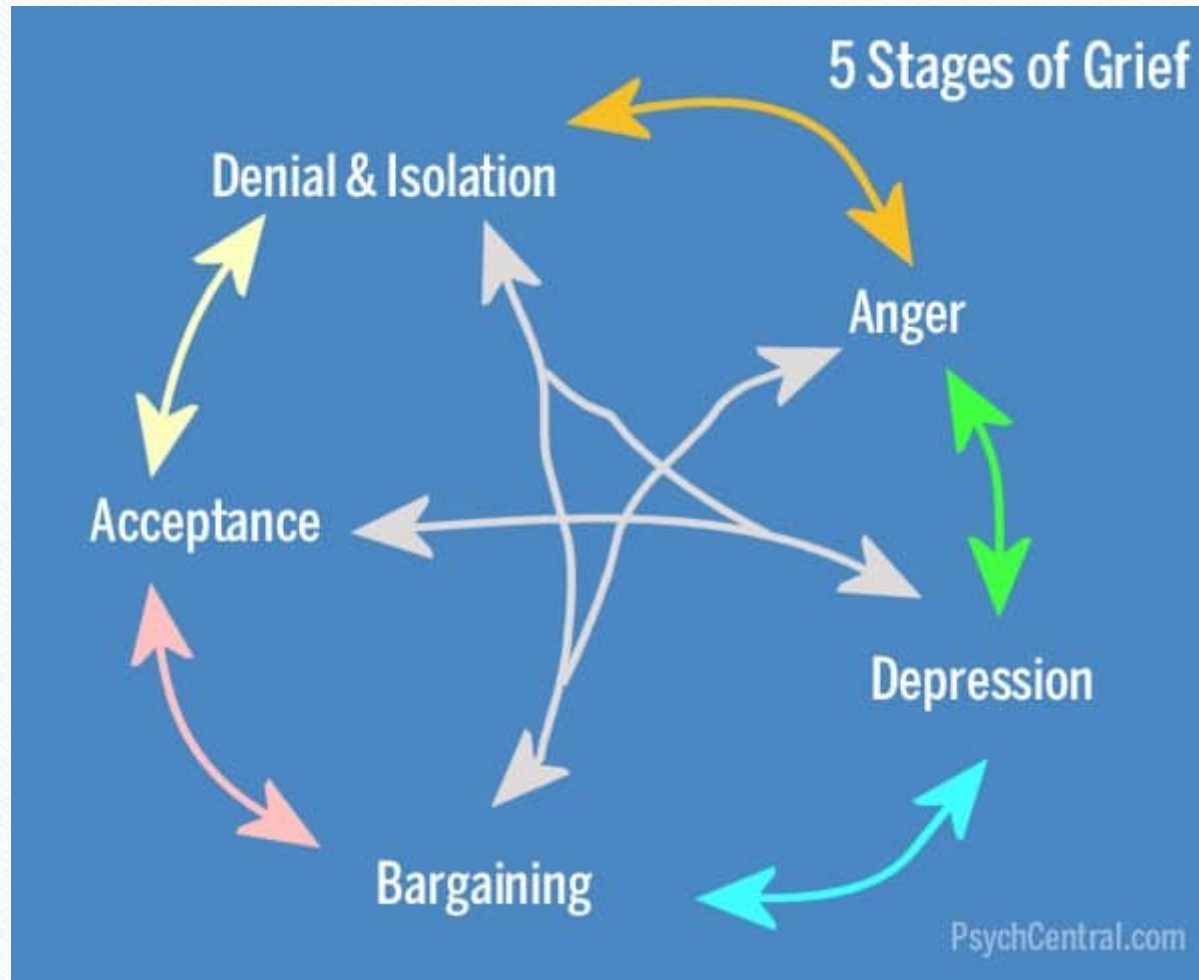
- Focus on what we can control
- Start with our self care



# Focus on basic needs



**Know what  
grieving looks  
like**





Know the signs you and or your child are overwhelmed and may need a mental health professional



# Signs of a Panic Attack



**Nausea**



**Chills or hot flashes**



**Sweating**



**Trembling or shaking**



**Heart palpitations**

how to be flexible and revise plans in the face of new information and changing school situations; and methods to



**Numbness and tingling**



**Hyperventilation**



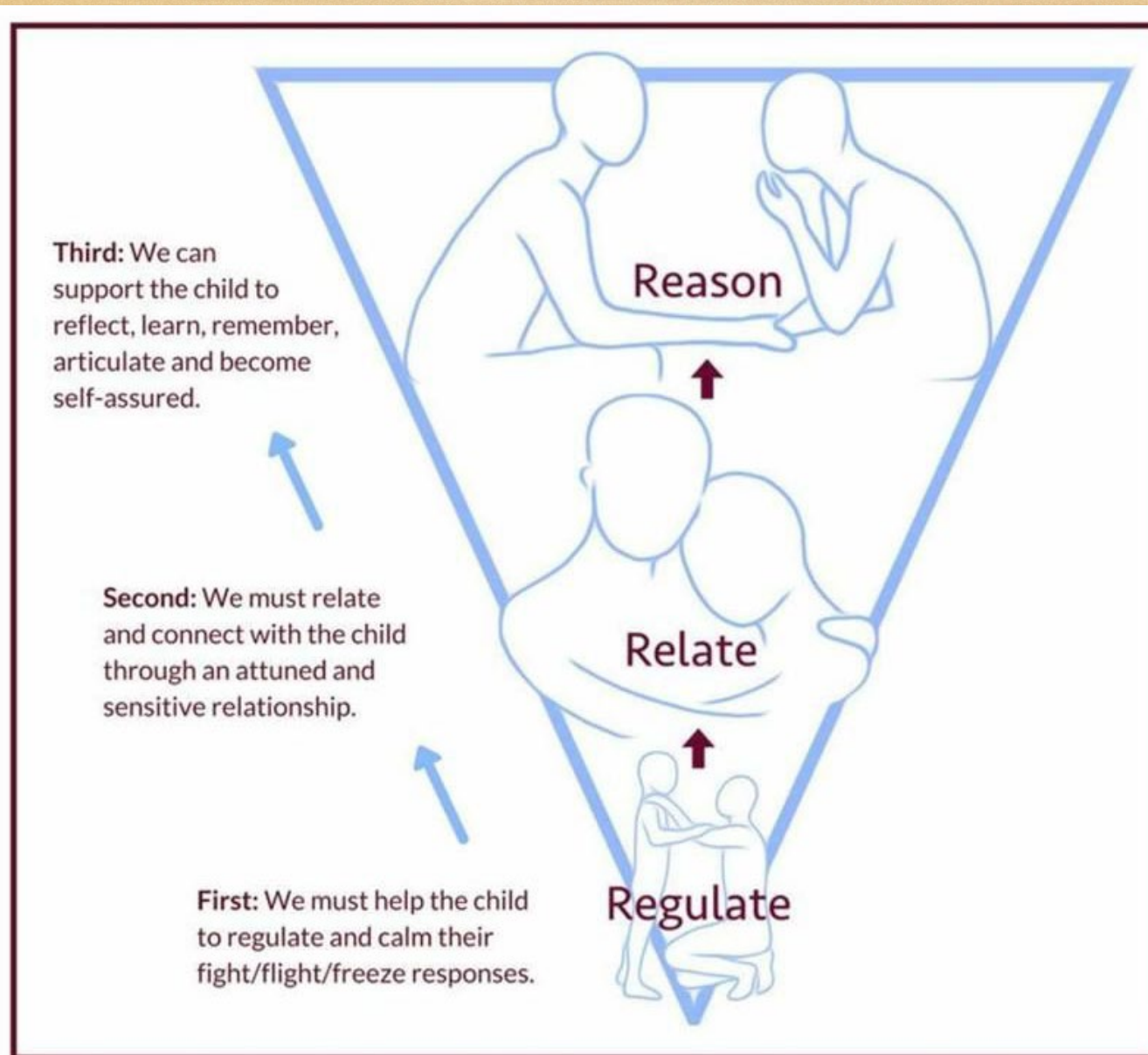
**Dizziness**





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Focus on **Coregulation**- regulating our emotions so they can share our calm and frontal lobe



Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.





breathe.





# Teach our kids self regulation through Breathing

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- Breathe in through nose for 3 seconds and out from mouth for 5-6 seconds (exhale longer than inhale is key!)
- Slow motion imagery
- Feet and hand position, no crossing body
- Noisy breath
- Closing eyes
- Finding time to integrate into your day
- Use apps like Calm or Stress Guide



# Traditions & Routines

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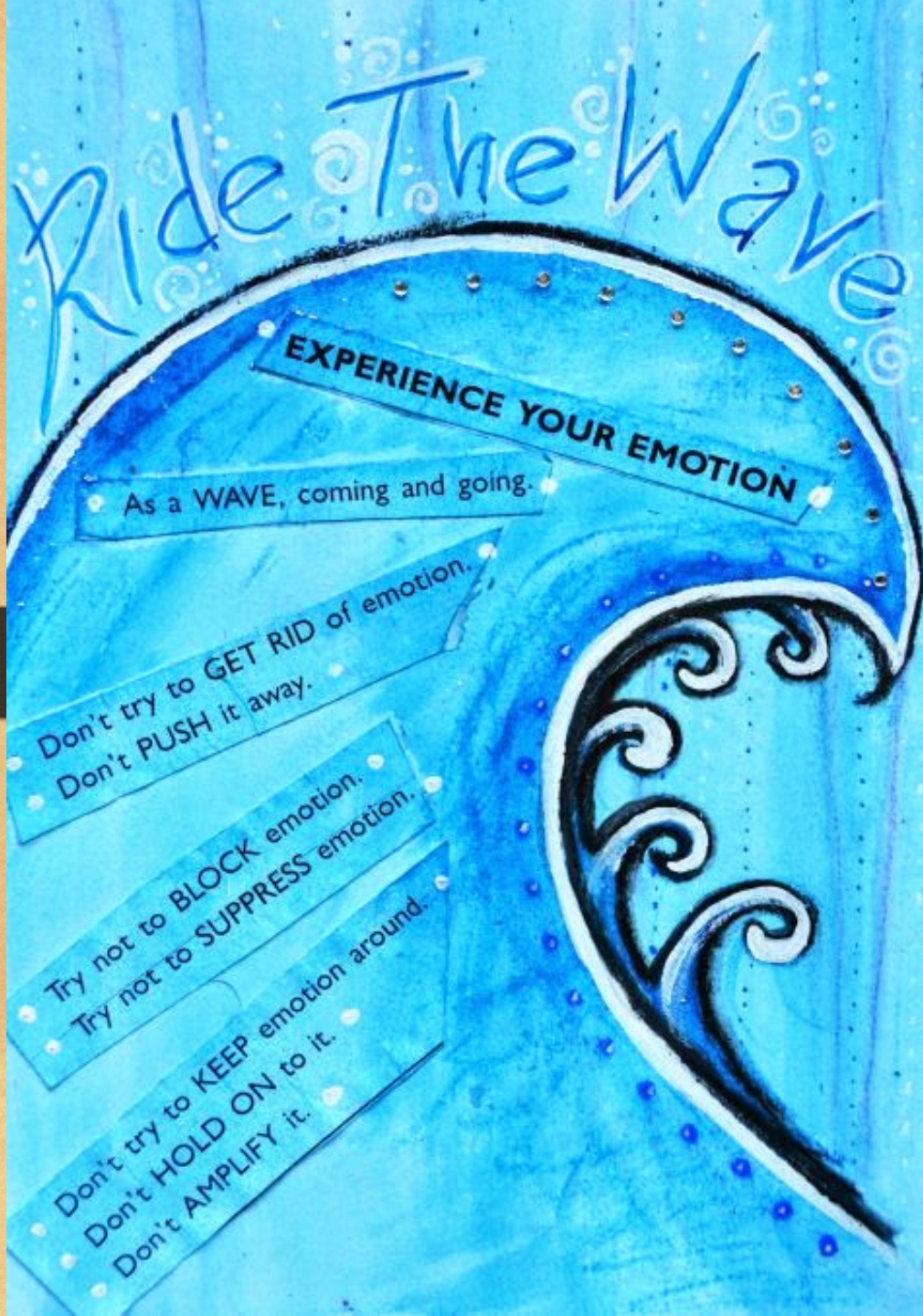
- Establishing routines
  - provides predictability and brings about a sense of calm especially in times of stress and anxiety
- Consistent sleep routine
- Exercise, walks together, game nights, regular & predictable *opportunities for connection*

# Our words & actions

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- Positive messaging
- Reassurances
- Encourage mindfulness exercises (gratitude journaling)





Text

You can't stop  
the waves, but  
you can learn  
how to surf.

Swami  
Satchidananda



# Remember outside help is available

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- Know when to enlist professionals
- Professionals can help by providing:
  - A comprehensive evaluation with objective data to guide a differential diagnosis and develop a treatment plan
  - Deliver anxiety-specific therapies such as biofeedback, Coping Cat<sup>TM</sup> CBT, Applied Behavior Analysis (BCBA), and EMDR
  - Provide parent coaching
  - Teach good sleep hygiene
- Teletherapy works, services can and should still be accessed



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Heart Math certified biofeedback practitioner  
Specializing in biofeedback, therapy, executive functioning, and  
psychological testing (504/IEPs)

# Resources



# Resources

## **Wearing masks:**

<https://nortonchildrens.com/news/kids-face-masks-how-to-help-your-child/>

Books – explaining covid to kids:

Why Did the Whole World Stop?: Talking With Kids About COVID-19 by Heather Black

What is Social Distancing?: A Children's Guide & Activity Book by Lindsey Coker Luckey

## **Reflective Listening:**

<https://jonathanvanviegen.com/reflective-listening-with-your-kids-why-you-need-to-keep-it-positive/>

## **Coregulation:**

<https://genmindful.com/blogs/mindful-moments/what-co-regulation-looks-like>

## **Coping Skills:**

<https://www.centervention.com/social-skills-resources-for-parents/>

## Treatment Resources

- Child Mind Institute (Telehealth visits available during this time, no ins)
- Hartford anxiety clinic (Telehealth visits available during this time, takes most ins)
- 211 Infoline (mental health resources & mobile crisis)
- Ct Children's Medical Center, Danbury (Pediatric neurology, takes most ins)
- Associated Neurologists, Danbury (Pediatric neuropsychology, takes most ins)

### Websites:

[www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org) [www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)



## Resources

### **Physical signs of anxiety**

<https://tinyurl.com/ycu7u5tf>

Tips for handling anxiety in your child <https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

### **Tips for talking to children about COVID:**

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/10-tips-for-talking-about-covid-19-with-your-kids>

<https://childmind.org/article/anxiety-and-coping-with-coronavirus/>

<https://childmind.org/article/supporting-teenagers-and-young-adults-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

## CT Grief and Loss Resources

- [Adam's house](#), Shelton CT: grief education and peer support; "We support children struggling with any type loss- parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt/uncle or friend. All programs are offered at NO-COST to participating families." (203) 513-2808
- [Healing Hearts Center](#), Danbury (203) 303-9409 Support for adults and children of all ages
- [Center for Hope](#), Darien (203) 655-4693 Grief support groups adults and children, Their [Den for Grieving Kids](#) programs are specifically for children,
- [The Cove Center for Grieving Children](#): Based in Meriden, Resources and support. Offering some virtual programs in Fall 2020.
- [Grief](#): some guidance from [Hey Sigmund](#): "The temptation can be to push your sadness away, pretend it doesn't exist, or cover it up with another feeling, such as anger. The problem is that none of that makes the feeling go away, and can sometimes make you feel worse for longer.
- [The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#) has a very brief brochure for families on how children may experience grief. Find it [HERE](#)



## General resources on grief and loss

- [The Dougy Center](#) provides support to children, teens, young adults and families grieving the loss of a friend or family member; [Help for Kids](#) and [Help for Teens](#), including: [How to Help a Grieving Teen](#)
- [Child Mind Institute: Helping Children Cope With Grief](#); toolkit for parents including talking about grief and loss at different ages.
- Chicago Tribune: [Helping your child comfort a grieving pal](#) "I love the idea of framing it as a family value that you decide upon and live by. We show up. We help. We listen. We push aside our own awkward feelings, because our own awkward feelings aren't the point."
- [What's your Grief?](#) Extensive resources about grief for people of all ages and all situations.
- [Building Emotional Intelligence in Children: Talking About Sadness, Loss and](#)

## TALKING ABOUT TRAGEDY & TRAUMA

- [HERE](#) is a helpful article from Child Mind Institute with guidelines for discussing frightening news with children.
- [The National Association for School Psychologists guide: how to help children with special needs cope with traumatic events. This guide includes specific strategies for children with Autism; Cognitive Limitations; Learning Disabilities; Visual, Hearing or Physical Limitations; and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders. Find it HERE](#)
- [How to Talk to Kids and Teens About World Trauma](#) from [Hey Sigmund](#)