The background features several blue, spiky virus-like particles of varying sizes scattered across a light blue gradient. A horizontal grey band is positioned across the middle of the slide, containing the main title text. A small green vertical bar is visible on the far left edge.

# Coping with Uncertainty as School Begins: What We Can Do to Help Our Kids and Ourselves

Presented by Dr. Mary Murphy  
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

# Objectives

- What we know from past experiences about how we can cope with school reopening
- How parents can support themselves (mental health & self care)
- How to support our children (focus on what you can control, coping, & flexibility)
- What professionals can do

The New York Times

The landscape we  
find ourselves in.....

## 'It Was Just Too Much': How Remote Learning Is Breaking Parents

For the adults in the house, trying to do their own jobs while helping children with class work has become one of the most trying aspects of the pandemic.



<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/27/nyregion/coronavirus-homeschooling-parents.html>

# A third of Americans now show signs of clinical anxiety or depression, Census Bureau finds amid coronavirus pandemic

By **Alyssa Fowers** and **William Wan** May 26

For every 100 American adults, **34** show symptoms of **anxiety, depression, or both**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/05/26/americans-with-depression-anxiety-pandemic/?arc404=true>

**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

“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.”

“We can give our kids one of two perspectives. That of victimhood: that they've lost things they're entitled to, that they should remain outraged, and that they will be forever scarred by their current losses. Or that of empowerment: narratives of delayed gratification, of resiliency, of grieving and moving on, and of finding new meaning and new coping skills.”

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

# What we know from past experience

- Return to school and the reopening of our community comes with anxiety and worries
- Although no roadmap for this what we know about coping comes from 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 is social emotional learning?



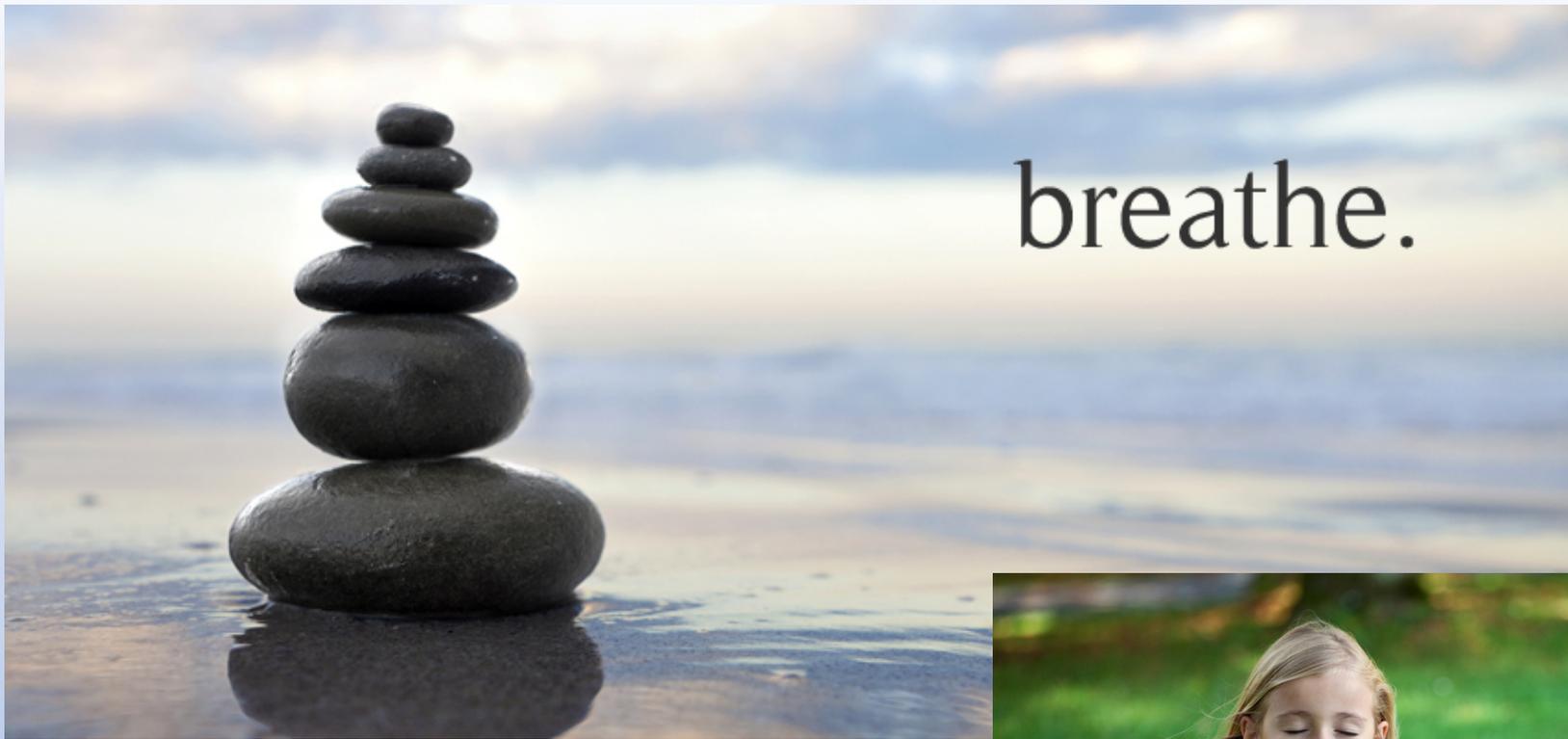
The adult version of this for us  
we will do best if we focus on  
our own mental health and  
self care





# Coping Skills

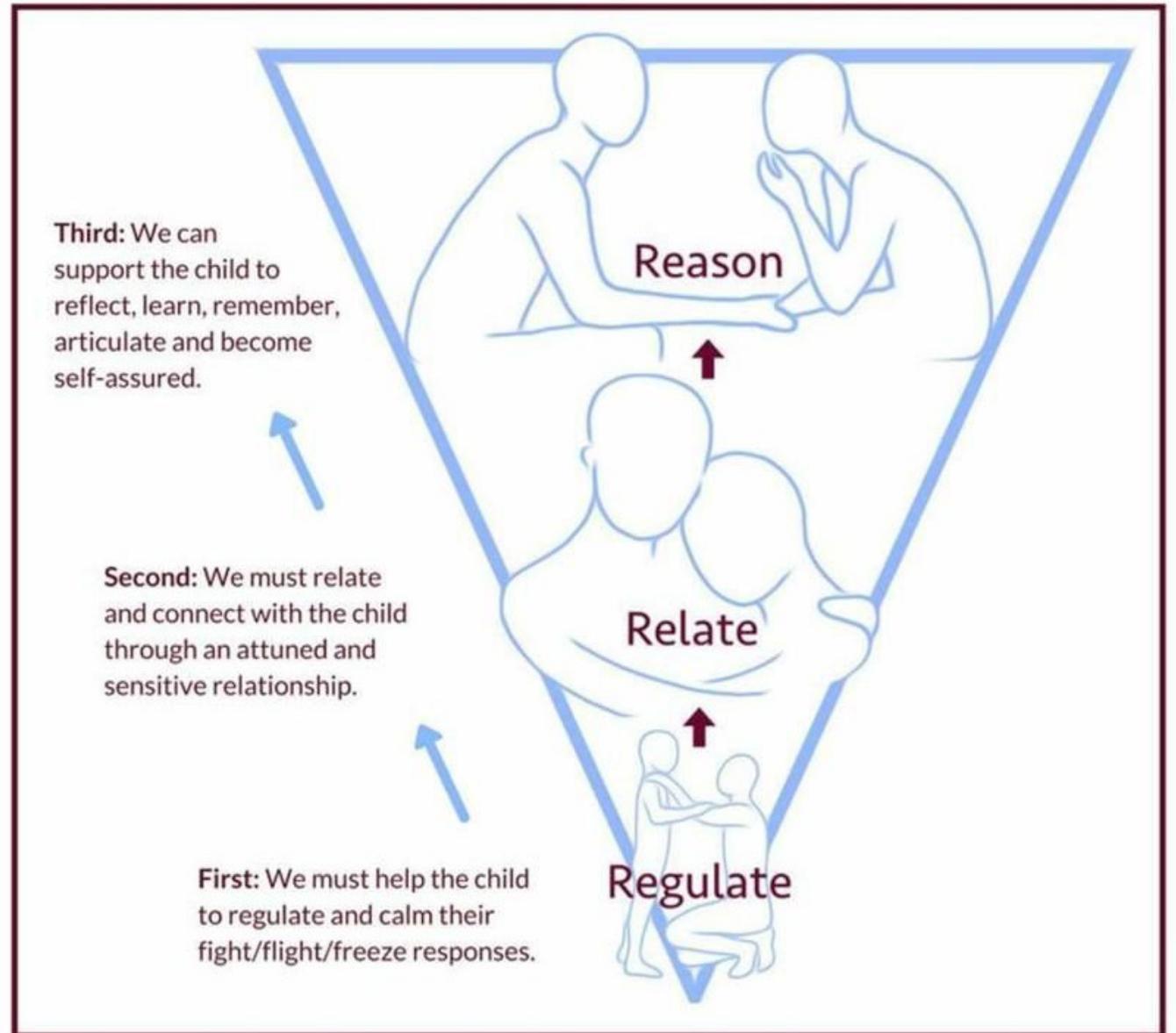
- SEL curriculum focuses on teaching kids how to calm themselves (self regulation), empathy (connection), problem solving & focusing (self management), relationship / social skills (connection)
- Coping skills are our best self regulation tool and the cornerstone of social emotional learning
  - Breathing (self management)
  - Co-regulation and Self regulation (connection)
  - Reflective listening (connection)
  - Focus on gratitude (mindset)
  - Establishing routines (self management)



# Teach our kids self regulation through Breathing

- 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

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

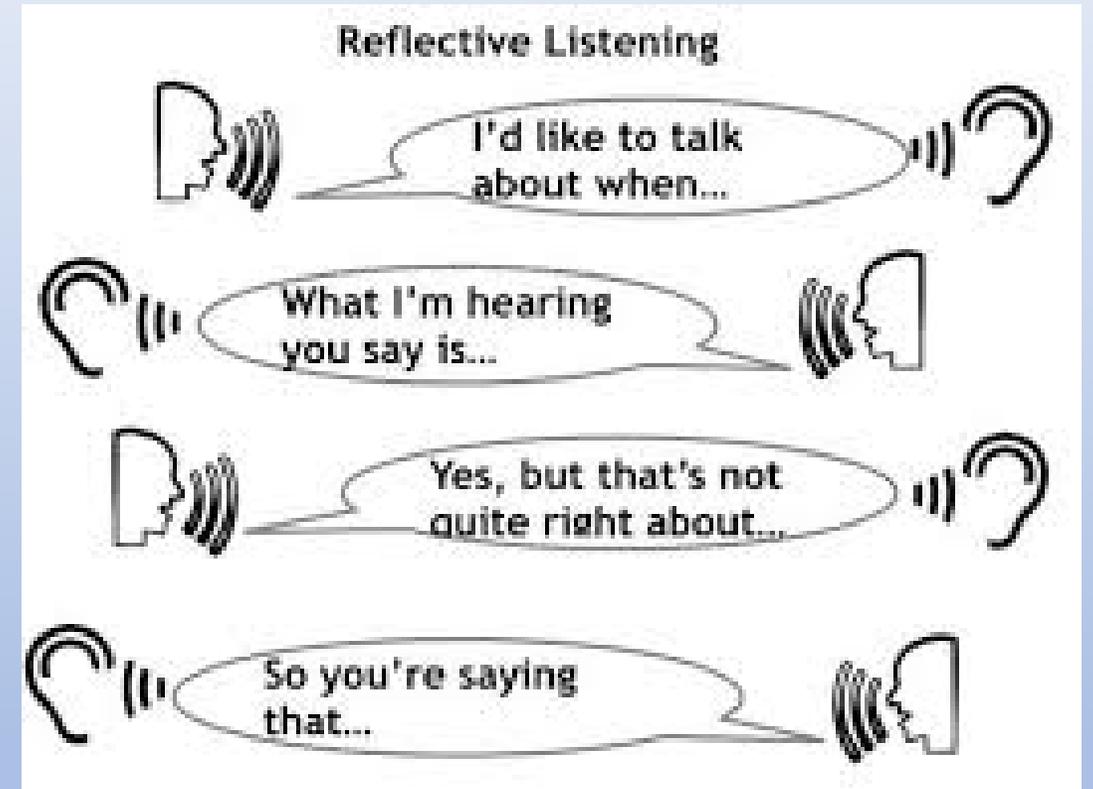


Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.

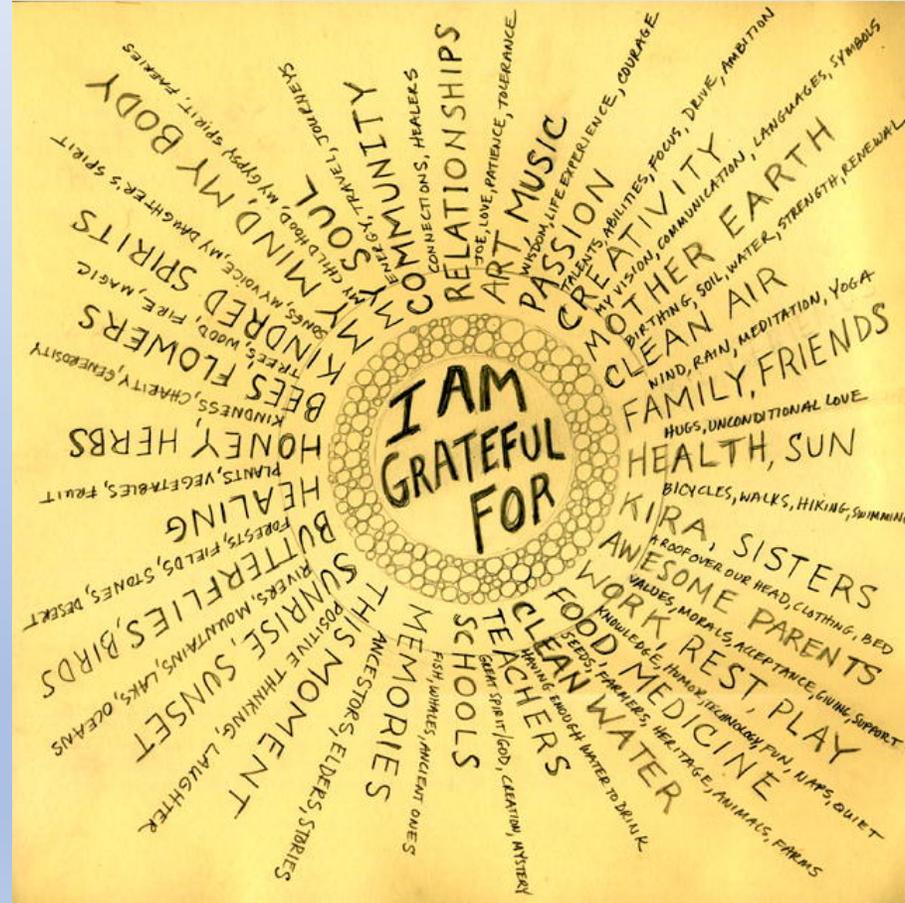
# Use Reflective Listening

## Basic Reflective Listening Formula

Tentative Opening	+ Feeling	+ About/Because/When + Thought
It sounds like	you feel mad	about
I hear you saying that	you feel sad	because of
If I hear you correctly	you feel glad	when
You seem to be saying	you feel afraid	about
I think I hear you saying	you feel confused	because of
I'm not sure I am follow	you feel ashamed	about
Am I hearing you say	you feel lonely	when



# Begin each day with gratitude



# Routines

- 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, predictable opportunities for connection

# 3. Focus on being flexible

- Know this.....
- Things will go wrong
- What can we do to be flexible and revise plans in the face of new information and changing school situations
- Big picture things: Letting go of rigid thinking we had about right and wrong, Revisit our view of what is success for our children, modeling flexibility and assumption of good will, lack of judgment of others/ respecting differences- what's right for some is not right for all, kids noticing other kids not "following the rules" and witnessing our reactions as a guide, reactivity vs acceptance
- Practical things: Have backup plans for childcare, full time remote learning scenario

Let's start practicing this now

**IF A FRIEND SAYS...**



"I'm sending my kids  
back to school"



"I'm doing virtual  
learning"



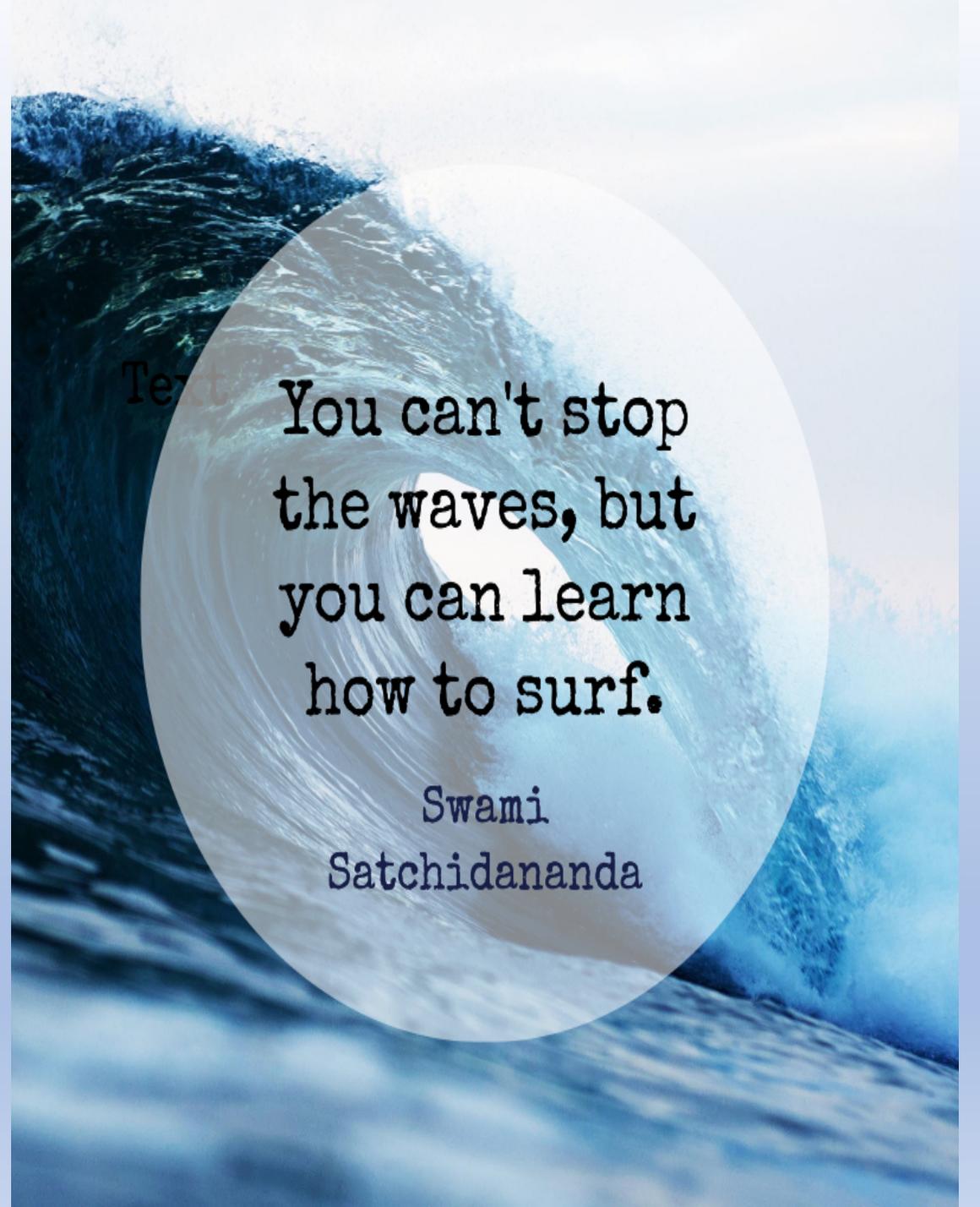
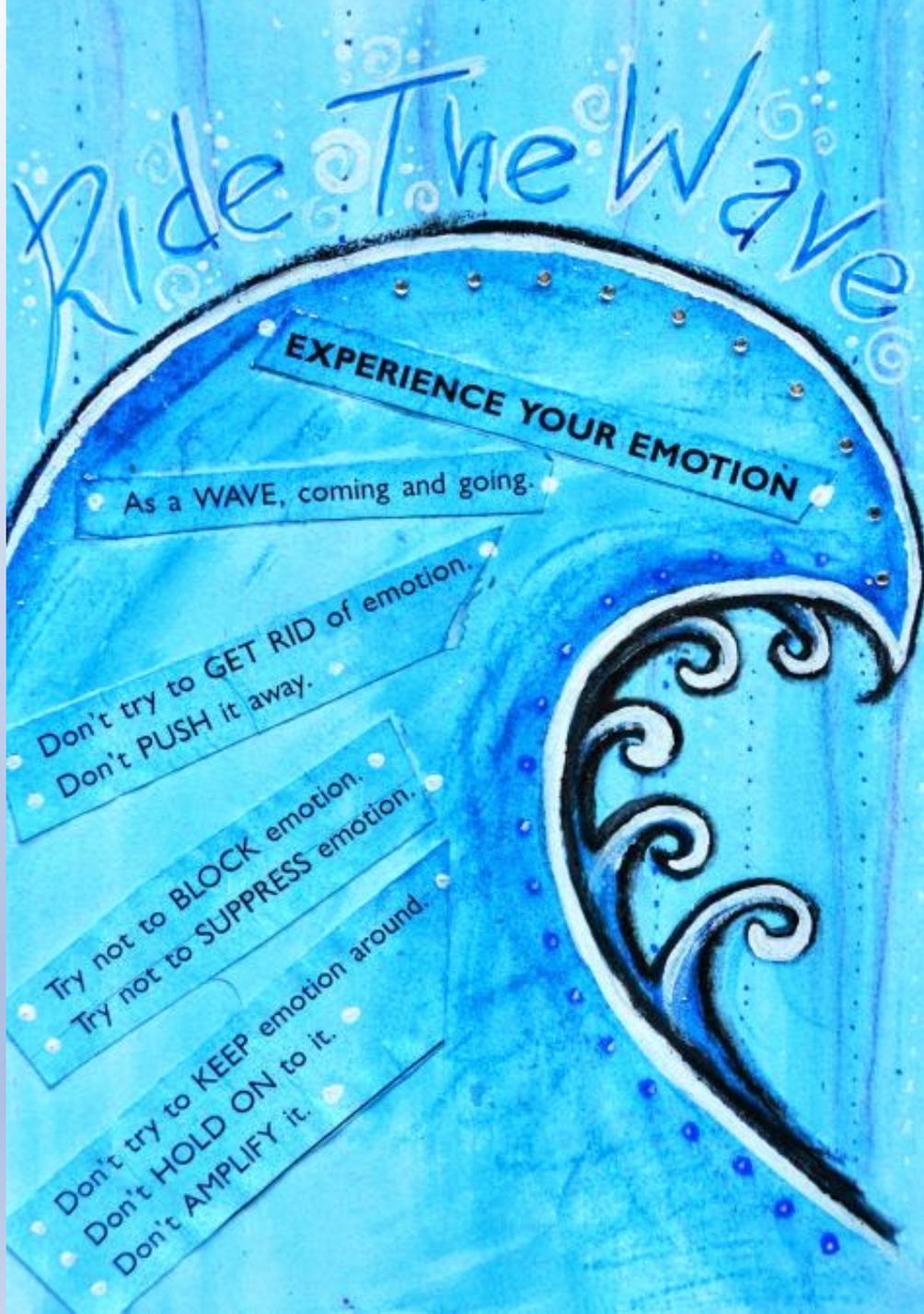
"I'm homeschooling  
my kids"

**WE SAY...**



"I'm so proud of you!  
I know it was not an easy  
decision to make!"







**What can parents do to help?**



# 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**



# What can parents do?

- Focus on your self care- limit alcohol intake and media exposure
- Focus on connection- developing connections w teachers, between teachers & parents and between teachers & kids
  - Especially for kids w special needs (IEPs & 504 plans)
  - Teachers still need to access those plans and address the kids' needs



# Remember outside help is available

- 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™ CBT, Applied Behavior Analysis (BCBA), and EMDR
  - Provide parent coaching
  - Teach good sleep hygiene
- Teletherapy works, services can and should still be accessed

# Remember

- We are in this together kids and parents alike
- We may have never gone through something exactly like this situation but others like it in the past are our guide
- When we focus on SEL needs (our own and our kids) we recover and even thrive building more resiliency and grit than we ever would have otherwise
- Modeling flexibility, importance of staying connected, and staying focused on what we can control we will all do better no matter what changes are ahead of us

# 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/>

# Resources

## 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)
- <https://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2015/10/28/6-books-about-anxiety-for-families-with-special-needs/>
- <https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/12-books-for-kids-and-teens-about-stress-and-anxiety>

# 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/>

# Resources

- Text ACT to 741741 to contact the Crisis Text Line and connect with a trained Crisis Counselor.
- CDC resources for coping with anxiety

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html)

- SAMHSA tips for social distancing  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>

Mary Murphy, PhD  
32 Church Hill Rd,  
Suite 208  
Newtown, CT 06470  
[drmarymurphyphd@gmail.com](mailto:drmarymurphyphd@gmail.com)  
[www.drmarymurphyphd.com](http://www.drmarymurphyphd.com)  
203-300-2316

- Licensed Clinical Psychologist
- Private practice in Newtown, CT (currently telehealth only\*)
- Heart Math certified biofeedback practitioner
- Specializing in biofeedback, therapy, executive functioning, and psychological testing (504/IEPs)