



# CVUSD ERMHS Guide

*Behavior Intervention Program*

In this guide:

1. Tips for Talking with Children and Teens
2. Coping Skills Review
3. Recommended Resources

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# Talking to Children

“Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting and less scary.” Mr. Rogers

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## **1).Don't be afraid to discuss it**

It's hard to avoid hearing information given our social media/news, so your children already know about it.

Not talking about it, may create more worry for your child. It's best to “name it to tame it.”

Talking about it, may help your child feel informed and reassured.



# Talking to Children

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## 2.) **Be developmentally appropriate**

Keep it simple, especially for the younger children. Don't provide too much information which may overwhelm them.

## 3.) **Take cues from your child**

Invite them to tell you what they already know about the virus and give them time to ask questions. Avoid encouraging frightening "what ifs."

Validate their feelings

TIME TO COME IN, BEAR



# Talking to Children

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## 4). Reassure them that they are safe and focus on what you can do to stay safe!

Children (and adults) feel better when they are empowered to take specific actions. Let them know they can be:

“Germ Busters” - by social distancing and washing hands

“Catch that Cough” - by coughing and sneezing into our elbows

“Rest is Best” - Let them know that rest is a great defense to keep us all healthy.



# Talking to Children

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## 5). **Be mindful of and manage your own anxiety**

Children sense and mirror the feelings and actions of those around them. Check in with yourself. If you are feeling anxious, take some time to help calm yourself before talking to your children.

## 6). **Stick to routine**

As much as possible, it is helpful for children and adults to stick to a routine to ease feelings of uncertainty.

*References:* <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>  
<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>



# Talking to Teens

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## 1). **Check your headspace**

Teens are good at picking up on their parents' feelings, so take some time to work through them. Remember that it's okay to feel stressed, and to show your young person how you are managing those feelings.

Try to have a conversation about the coronavirus when you're feeling relatively calm, not when you're especially stressed or anxious



# Talking to Teens

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## 2). **Practice open communication**

Communicating about coronavirus is particularly tricky because you won't always have easy answers about why it's happening and what exactly it means for your teen.

Make space for conversations (in a quiet place where you have some privacy) where you might ask them, "How are you feeling at the moment?" Share some of the things you are feeling and thinking, along with the plans you're making to take care of them and yourself. Telling them the proactive things you're doing to cope will help them feel less hopeless and uncertain.



# Talking to Teens

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## **3). Offer them reassurance**

Let your teen know that it's normal to be feeling stressed or anxious about the current situation. Reassure them of what you're doing to help them stay safe (e.g. practicing good hygiene behaviors)

## **4). Validate their disappointment**

For many the most painful part of the coronavirus crisis will be losing important experiences: high school sports seasons, proms, theater productions, and high school graduations.

Give them room to share their feelings and listen without judgment





# Talking to Teens

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## **5). Help them practice mindfulness**

You tell yourself it's okay to feel anxious right now. It's okay to feel scared. It's okay to feel angry. You're accepting the feelings you have and validating them because we're all having those feelings. It's really important that you accept them as they are rather than fighting them.



# Coping Skills

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Coping skills are strategies that help reduce negative feelings that may result when someone is under stress. Those feelings might be the result of anxiety, anger, sadness, depression, or just general day-to-day stress. Practicing coping skills can help children and teenagers learn how to manage their emotions in a positive way.

It's important to recognize that some coping skills may work well for one person and other skills will work well for another. Therefore, every child or teenager should have a “toolbox” of coping strategies that works for them. The “toolbox” should be appropriate to each individual's developmental level and tailored to your child or teen's cognitive, social, and emotional needs.



# Coping Skills

## Elementary School Children

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### DEEP BREATHING

- When you are calm and relaxed, your body is in “rest and digest” mode. You breathe normally, your heart rate is lower and your muscles are relaxed. However, when stress or anxiety or anger occurs, your body automatically switches into “flight, fight or freeze” mode. Your muscles tense up, your heart rate increases and your breathing becomes more shallow.
- Taking deep breaths, instead of shallow breaths, is one way to tell your body to get back to resting and digesting. That’s why deep breathing is important!
- Tell your child to inhale through the nose and into his abdomen. Tell him/ her to inhale for a count of four, then hold it in for a count of four. Ask your child to exhale through the mouth for a count of four. Quick note: The breathing we want kids to do is deep belly breaths, not shallow chest breaths. When they breathe in, their belly should expand, and when they breathe out, their belly should contract.



# Coping Skills

## Elementary School Children

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### DEEP BREATHING USING PROPS

#### USE BUBBLES

- Blowing gently to create bubbles is a good way to be playful and breathe deeply. Kids have to blow carefully and slowly to make the bubbles, which is a major reason to use it to help kids take deep breaths.

#### USE A PINWHEEL

- Kids can practice breathing out slowly or more quickly, using the speed of the pinwheel as a measure. Then they can figure out which way works and feels best for them.



# Coping Skills

Elementary School Children

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## DEEP BREATHING USING YOUR IMAGINATION

- Breathe in like you are smelling a flower, breathe out like you are blowing out birthday candles.
- Breathe in blue sky, Breathe out gray skies.
- Pretend your belly is like a balloon. Breathe in and make the balloon bigger, then breathe out and make the balloon shrink.
- Smell the soup, cool the soup or smell the hot cocoa, cool the hot cocoa

Reference:

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>



# Coping Skills

## Elementary School Children

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### **5, 4, 3, 2, 1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE- HOW TO DO IT:**

This technique will take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present. This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

**5 - LOOK:** Look around for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

**4 - FEEL:** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on.

**3 - LISTEN:** Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling. Say the three things out loud.

# Coping Skills

## Elementary School Children

### 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE- HOW TO DO IT:

**2 - SMELL:** Say two things you can smell. If you're allowed to, it's okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your 2 favorite smells.






**1 - TASTE:** Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

Take another deep belly breath to end.

Reference:

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety>

### 5 4 3 2 1 Grounding Exercise

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# Coping Skills

## Elementary School Children

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### RELAXATION

#### **Visualization**

Visualization is also known as visual guided imagery. This technique uses the imagination to slow down the chatter of the mind and help release negative thoughts and worries. Imagining a beautiful, peaceful place is one type of visualization that's easy for nearly any child to use as a stress reducer. Color visualization can also be helpful and is a very simple technique to teach a child.

1. Ask your child to imagine a favorite color that makes him/ her feel peaceful and safe.
2. Have him/ her imagine taking in that color with each breath and sending it throughout his/ her entire body as he/ she exhales.
3. Have him/ her continue until he/ she visualizes being filled with his/ her special, relaxing color.

A soothing sound, a special aroma, or the feeling of warmth or light can be used in place of the color.





# Coping Skills

## Elementary School Children

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### RELAXATION

#### **Laugh**

Laughter is a wonderful stress reliever that soothes tension and helps the body relax.

Ways to encourage your child to laugh include telling jokes, taking turns making silly faces or watching a funny cartoon.

#### **Stretch**

Stretching relaxes built up tension in the muscles. Teach your child how to gently **stretch** each muscle group and feel the muscles relax.

#### **Listen to Music**

Listening to calming **music** can help a child regain focus. Even very young children may enjoy listening to relaxing music.



# Coping Skills

## Middle and High School Adolescent Aged Children

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- 1) **Relaxation Techniques:** Relaxation techniques include a number of exercises that help reduce tension in the body and mind and reduce negative feelings associated with stress. The following can be tried:
- Deep Breathing- It is natural for us to take long, deep breaths when relaxed. Practicing deep breathing helps the body calm and return to a more relaxed state.
  - Mindful Meditation-This form of meditation helps reduce negative thoughts leading to feelings of anxiety or depression. Mindful Meditation reminds you to stay focused on the present moment.
  - Grounding- Like Mindful Meditation, Grounding is a simple exercise that helps you focus on your present surroundings and turn away from negative thoughts, feelings, and emotions.
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation-This is an exercise that reduce stress and anxiety in the body by having you tense and relax each muscle. PMR can produce an immediate relaxation effect and is best practiced regularly.

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/relaxation-techniques.pdf>

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/how-to-practice-mindfulness-meditation.pdf>

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/grounding-techniques.pdf>



# Coping Skills

## Middle and High School Adolescent Aged Children

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2) **Art:** Engaging in art is a productive and creative way to express and manage overwhelming feelings

- Color mandalas
- Paint
- Draw or doodle
- Write in a journal
- Write a story or poem

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/mandalas.pdf>

3) **Movement:** Movement activities reduce stress hormones and fosters a sense well-being. \*Please keep in mind CDC social distancing requirements

- Take a quick walk
- Play ball in the yard
- Try a yoga video
- Dance to music



# Mental Health Resources

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## General Mental Health

### The California Peer-Run Warm Line

- Call the Warm Line at 1-855-845-7415 or chat online at <https://www.mentalhealthsf.org/peer-run-warmline/>
- A non-emergency resource for anyone in California seeking emotional support. Provides assistance via phone and webchat on a nondiscriminatory basis to anyone in need with concerns such as challenges with interpersonal relationships, anxiety, panic, depression, finance, alcohol and drug use, and COVID-19.

### National Helpline

- Call the National Hotline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- A free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

### Therapist Aid

- <https://www.therapistaid.com/>
- Provides worksheets, videos, guides, and other tools to aid children, adolescents, and adults on topics such as anger, anxiety, communication, depression, grief, relationships, relaxation, self-esteem, stress, etc.



# Mental Health Resources

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## Applications

### Virtual Hope Box

- <https://www.my-therappy.co.uk/app/virtual-hope-box>
- A smartphone application that contains simple tools to help a person with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking.

### Calm

- <https://www.calm.com/>
- Calm is a meditation, sleep and relaxation application that creates unique audio content that strengthens mental fitness and tackles some of the biggest mental health challenges of today: stress, anxiety, insomnia, & depression.

### Headspace

- <https://www.headspace.com/>
- Headspace is a resource that offers guided meditations, animations, articles, and videos for children and adults to address issues such as sleep, focus, stress, and anxiety through meditation and mindfulness.



# Mental Health Resources

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## Suicide

### MY 3

- <https://my3app.org/>
- MY3 is for individuals who may be having thoughts of suicide, or who have a history of suicidal behavior. It is designed to help these individuals stay safe during when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide.

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

- Call hotline at 1-800-273-Talk (8255) or chat online at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support in English or Spanish for people in distress and prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones.

### The Crisis Text Line

- The Crisis Text Line is the only 24/7, nationwide crisis-intervention text-message hotline. The Crisis Text Line can be reached by texting HOME to 741-741.



# Mental Health Resources

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## For Families

### Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Caring for Children: Tips to Keep Children Healthy While School's Out](#)

### National Child Traumatic Stress Network

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with The Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

### Childtrends.org

- [Child Trends Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)



# CVUSD BIP Counselors (ERMHS)

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Katrina Gomez, Behavior Intervention Program Coordinator

[Katrina\\_Gomez@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:Katrina_Gomez@chino.k12.ca.us) or 909.628.1201 ext. 8907

Donna Baca: [donna\\_baca@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:donna_baca@chino.k12.ca.us) , Office hours: 10:00 am- 12:00 pm

Vanessa Cruz: [vanessa\\_cruz@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:vanessa_cruz@chino.k12.ca.us) , Office hours: 10:00 am- 12:00 pm

Matthew Janse: [matthew\\_janse@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:matthew_janse@chino.k12.ca.us), Office hours: 9:00 am -11:00 am

Meghan Phillips: [meghan\\_phillips@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:meghan_phillips@chino.k12.ca.us), Office hours: 10:00 am- 12:00 pm

Natalie Sanchez: [natalie\\_sanchez@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:natalie_sanchez@chino.k12.ca.us) , Office hours: 10:00 am- 12:00 pm

Christen Westberry: [christen\\_Westberry@chino.k12.ca.us](mailto:christen_Westberry@chino.k12.ca.us), Office hours:10:00 am- 12:00 pm