

Middle School Counseling:

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade High School Plans-** Postponed until further notice.

**Supporting your middle school student during this school closure:**

Middle school students thrive under routine, structure, and systems of support. When there is a major event or disruption to lifestyle, the brain tends to be flooded with an emotional response. The main question your student will ask is “Am I safe?” This is a typical reaction. How our students are supported during this time is critical in helping them to maintain a healthy mindset. Below are signs to watch for in your student and how to support them during this time.

- **Signs to Watch For:**
  - Increase or decrease in energy or activity levels.
  - Increase in irritability with outbursts of anger or frequent arguing
  - Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
  - Somatic symptoms- frequent headache, stomach complaints
  - Refusal to eat
  - Excessive worrying
  - Feeling confused- having difficulty concentrating, making decisions
  - Hyperfocusing on current events or frequent questioning
- **Ways to Relieve Stress:**
  - Set limits on how much time is spent reading or watching the news. This may include monitoring your student’s activity on their electronic device or communications.
  - Find people or resources you can depend on for accurate information. Discuss with your student sensational media as well as how to discern myth from fact. Here are good websites to visit:
    - **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
    - **World Health Organization:** [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
  - Model healthy habits for your family. Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water. Get enough sleep, rest, and physical exercise. Try to get some fresh air every day.
  - Use practical ways to relax. Take a walk, eat a good meal, read a book, listen to music. Pace yourself between stressful activities. Use the time off to relax and recharge.
  - Here are some helpful apps you can download to manage stress and anxiety:
    - **Calm**
    - **Headspace**
    - **Happify**
    - **Pacifica**
    - **Colorfy** (coloring app)
- **Talking to your student about COVID-19:**
  - Parents and/or guardians should recognize their own fears and anxieties. Adolescents can sense when adults are worried, which can make them worry even more. Wait until you are calm to discuss concerns with your student.
  - Share necessary facts with your student. Give them the facts about the illness, including how rare it is. Focus on what you are doing to stay safe and healthy. Not talking about

current events could cause them to worry more. Make sure the discussion is developmentally appropriate.

- Listen to your student, pay attention to their cues. They may have a lot of questions. Be prepared to have a candid, open discussion with them about any fears and worries. Validate their emotions. However, reassure them of precautions your family, as well as the community, has taken to ensure safety.
- Stick to a routine. Students thrive on routine, and can become stressed and anxious when their routine is disrupted. Try to maintain a set schedule for learning and free time.

#### **Resources -**

- **Ways to calm the brain:**
  - <https://www.edutopia.org/article/7-ways-calm-young-brain-trauma-lori-desautels>
- **Coping with Stress during Infectious Disease Outbreaks:**
  - <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4885.pdf>
- **Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus:**
  - <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- **Talking to Children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource:**
  - [https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/02292020\\_NASP\\_NASN\\_COVID-19\\_parent\\_handout.pdf](https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/02292020_NASP_NASN_COVID-19_parent_handout.pdf)
- **Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks:**
  - <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/PEP20-01-01-006>