

Supporting Emotional Wellness as Our Response to COVID Changes

COVID has affected individuals in varying ways, both directly and indirectly ([CDC, 2022](#)). While getting sick has been an ongoing concern, the impact of changes to routines, changes in learning environments and access, loss of loved ones and/or caretakers, changes in living situations, isolation and health care have impacted children and can appear as strong emotions. As recommendations change, explore the information below to support social and emotional wellness for your children and family.

How can I support my child through these changes?

Listen to your child: Talk with your child about their worries and share the facts. Encourage them to role play or draw what the experience will look or feel like, followed by a conversation to provide assurance.

Reassure: Share with your child that measures have been in place to protect us from the virus, and it will take time (slow warm-up) for us to return to being with others without masks or sitting in closer proximity and that is ok.

Prepare: Read the guidance provided by your child's school and BCPS to ensure that you are aware of what is expected. Talk with your child about how they feel about the change and if they are concerned share this information with your child's teacher. Remind your child that each person will respond differently to the changes.

Model Calm: Children take their social, emotional, and behavioral cues from their adults. To support your child in feeling safe, remaining calm is important. Also make sure to practice being kind to yourself and practice self-care with good social supports, engage in fun activities and take care physically. Your child is listening to and learning from you.

Practice & Plan: If your child experiences strong emotions, discuss what you can do as well as help them identify their trusted adult that they can speak with at school (i.e., teacher, administrator, counselor, social worker, psychologist, nurse, food & nutrition staff, etc.).

How can I check on my child and how they are doing?

Check-In with Your Child: Talk with your child about how they are doing. Depending on your child, emotions might vary and assure them that is ok. You know your child best and using compassion and understanding when listening and reassuring is important to their connection and feeling of safety.

How do I support my child in managing fears and worries?

Partner with Your Child's School: Communicate with your child's teacher and/or other school staff to ask about your child. If there are concerns with your child's social, emotional and/or behavioral performance, discuss how you can work in partnership and what support is available.

Assurance: While not every child might have fears and worries, parents/caretakers are encouraged to provide assurance that strong emotions when change occurs is real, common, and manageable ([HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov), 2021). Remind your child of the strategies for coping, including taking a break from social media, focus on the facts, set intentional time for breaks, connect with others, set goals, and take care of your body ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov), 2022). They might need your help in using these strategies, for example set time to take breaks, agree to a time where social media is off, schedule social time or play dates, and discuss the facts.

When to Seek Additional Help: Coping with uncertainty from changes can be stressful. Individuals might *experience fears and anxieties that are impacting their daily activities (i.e., excessive crying, difficulty sleeping, changes in eating habits, struggling to get out of bed, challenges with concentrating, increased irritability, decreased interest in activities they have found enjoyable, use of drugs or alcohol, thoughts, or expressions of self-harm)* and the support of a mental health provider should be sought. If you need support finding a mental health provider, reach out to your school counselor, school social worker or your school psychologist to assist you in identifying a mental health resource. ([NIMH](https://www.nimh.nih.gov), 2022)

Local Resources:

211 Maryland Essential Community Services: 211, <https://211md.org/>
Baltimore County Crisis Response: 410-931-2214
Crisis text line: Text the word "HOME" to 741741 for free 24-hour support
Maryland Suicide and Crisis Hotline: 1-800-422-0009
National Suicide Prevention Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK

