

Fostering Mental Health & Resilience in Children & Families During Challenging Times



Wellness Workshop



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Discussion Panelists

Dr. Aparajita "Tuma" Kuriyan, Ph.D. – Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychologist

Dr. Annalyn Gibson, MD – Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist

Jessica Wagner, LMHC – Crisis Therapist, Pediatric Behavioral Health & Wellness



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About Us

Melissa Heatly, Ph.D. - *Assistant Professor; PhD in Clinical & Developmental Psychology*

Dr. Aparajita “Tuma” Kuriyan, Ph.D. – *Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychologist*

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An Important Acknowledgement:

We Are (*still*) In The Midst of a National Crisis

Kids have not been distance-learning – they were home during a crisis trying to learn.

Parents haven't been working from home – they've been home during a crisis trying to work . . . And teach. . . And parent . . . (etc)

Teaching during this coronavirus pandemic is so far from typical. It's literally nothing school systems have ever done before.



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Impact of COVID-19 on Parents/Families/Educators



(PARENTHOOD!)

THE INVISIBLE LOAD OF MOTHERHOOD: DISTANCE LEARNING EDITION

@_HAPPYASAMOTHER

 HAVE THE EQUIPMENT	 MANAGE KIDS IN DIFFERENT GRADES	 TRY TO KEEP UP WITH ALL THE ASSIGNMENTS	 DO IT ALL WITH OUT A BREAK
 REMEMBER ALL THE LOGINS	 SUPPORT CHILD TOO YOUNG TO LEARN INDEPENDENTLY	 TRY NOT TO LOSE YOUR COOL	 BE PATIENT
 KEEP UP WITH YOUR OWN WORK	 COORDINATE WITH TEACHERS	 PRESERVE PARENT CHILD RELATIONSHIP	 MANAGE CHILD'S LEARNING NEEDS

Potential Impact of COVID-19 on Kids and Teens



Flight	Fight	Freeze	Doin' OK!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing • Avoiding work • Avoiding others • Skipping 'zoom' class • Daydreaming, zoning out • Seeming to sleep • Hiding or wandering • Becoming disengaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting out • Behaving aggressively • Acting silly • Exhibiting defiance • Being hyperactive • Arguing • Screaming/yelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Who cares" "What's the point" • Having trouble thinking • Trouble completing work • Having trouble participating • Giving a blank look • Feeling unable to move • Numbness, disconnection • Refusing to answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerating return to school • Socializing, from a distance • Largely engaged and participating • Likely has some mixed emotions and frustrations • Derives <i>some</i> pleasure from returning

Normalize these emotions

Positive Stress & 'Steeling'

Not all stress is bad.

Stressors can be positive, tolerable, or toxic (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

Supportive and caring adults are necessary to help children learn to cope with positive and tolerable stressors.

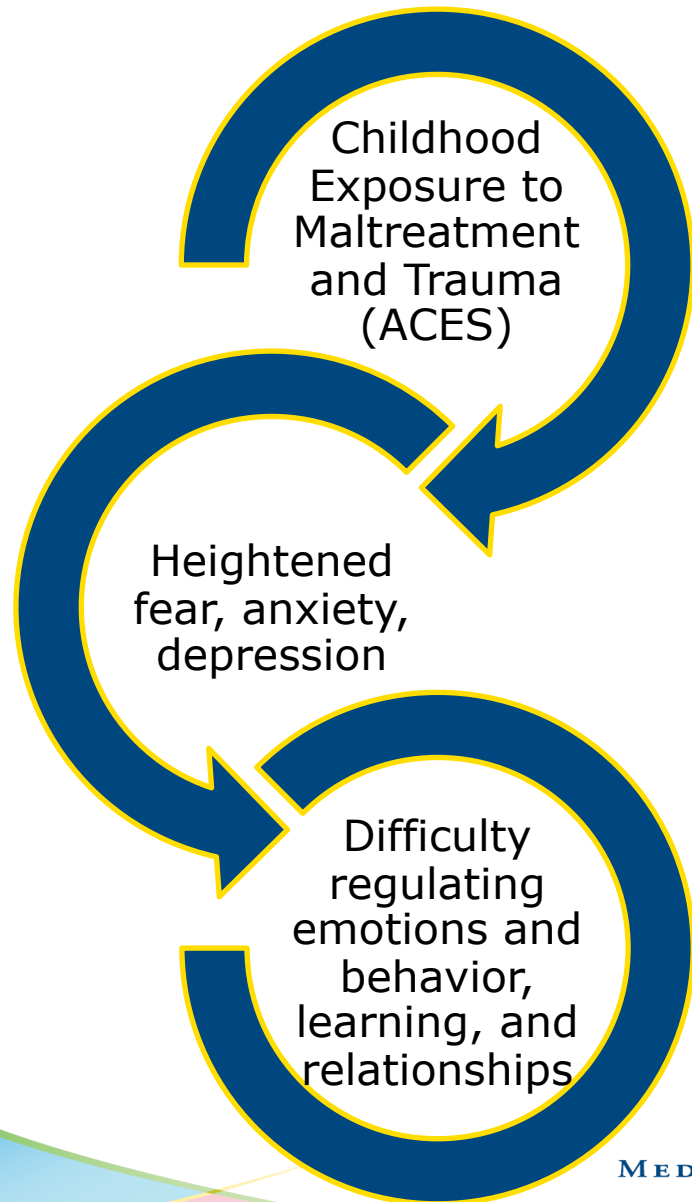
Steeling, or **stress inoculation**, refers to the beneficial effects of brief stress exposure (Rutter, 2012).

Positive Stress

Tolerable Stress

Toxic Stress
(ex. *child maltreatment*)

Acknowledging Trauma – Kids and Families



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Magnified by the broader context . . .

COVID-19
Pandemic

Disruption,
Isolation

Injustice, unrest

Disparities

Health and
Safety

Fear about
the Future

**Family, School, & Community can
play an important role...!**



A small green seedling with several leaves is growing out of a crack in a dark, textured surface. In the background, a bright, glowing light source creates a lens flare effect, illuminating the scene. The overall image conveys a sense of resilience and growth.

Resilience

The capacity for adapting successfully in the context of adversity

“I said to myself,
Malala, you must
be brave. You must
not be afraid
of anyone. You are
only trying to
get an education.
You are not
committing a crime.”
-Malala Yousafzai



Bethany Hamilton





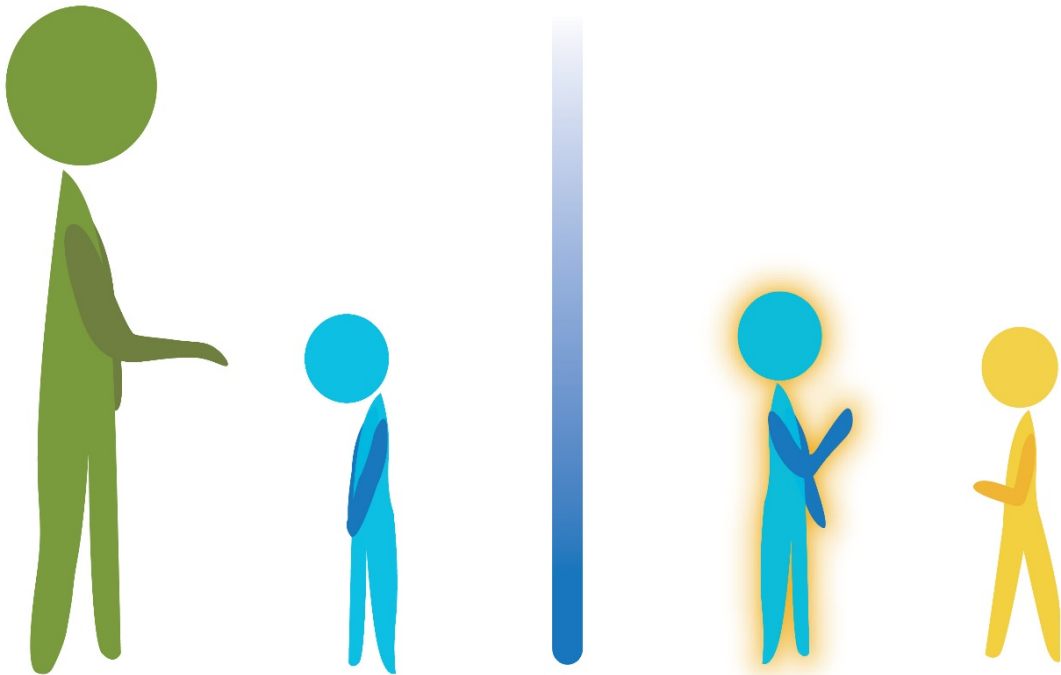


What is Resilience?

Resilience is Ordinary

RESILIENCE IS NOT a trait or characteristic.

Instead it is a process of child development that unfolds over time. Youth may be resilient in some areas of life but not others, and at some times but not at other times.



Resilience is a Process

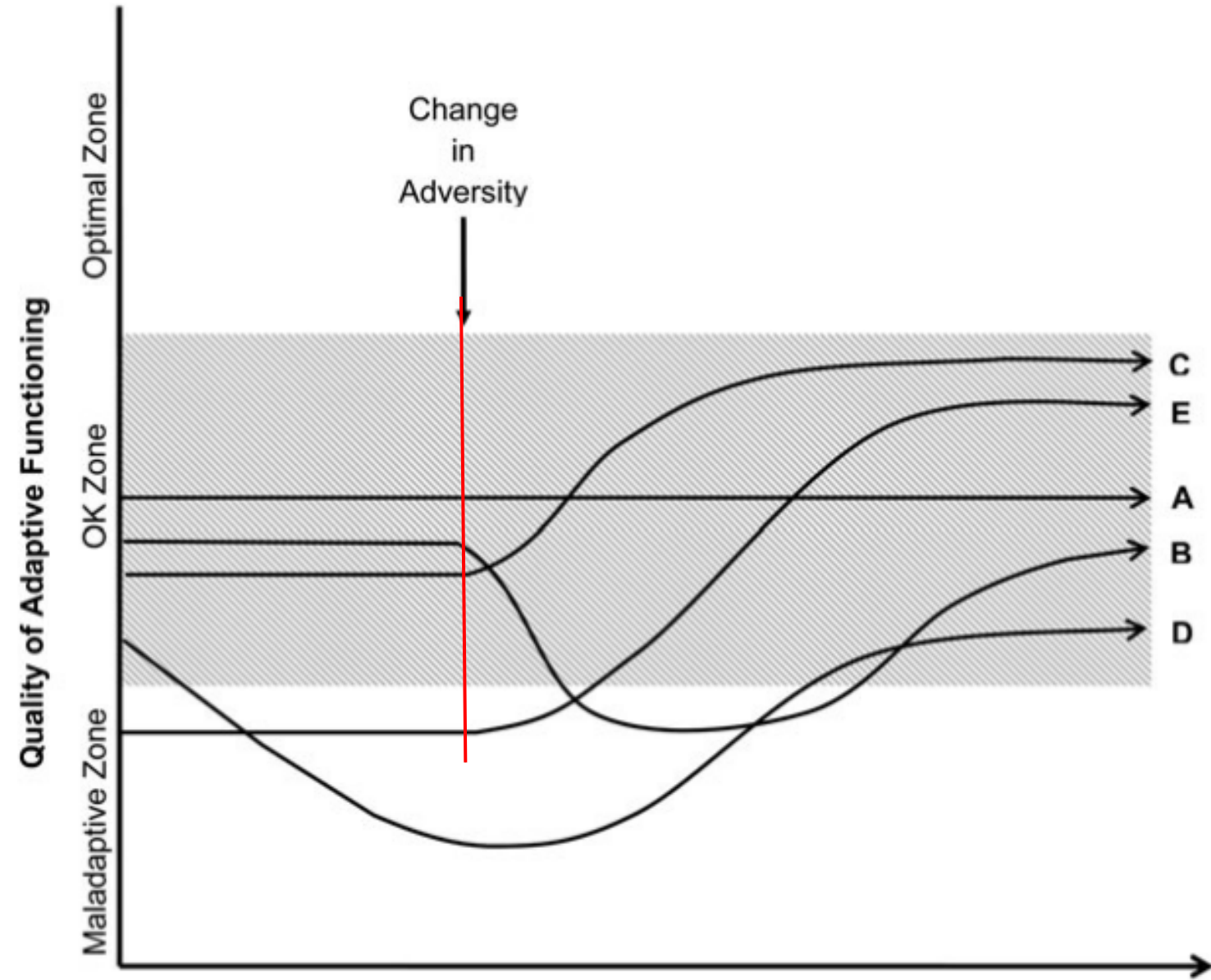
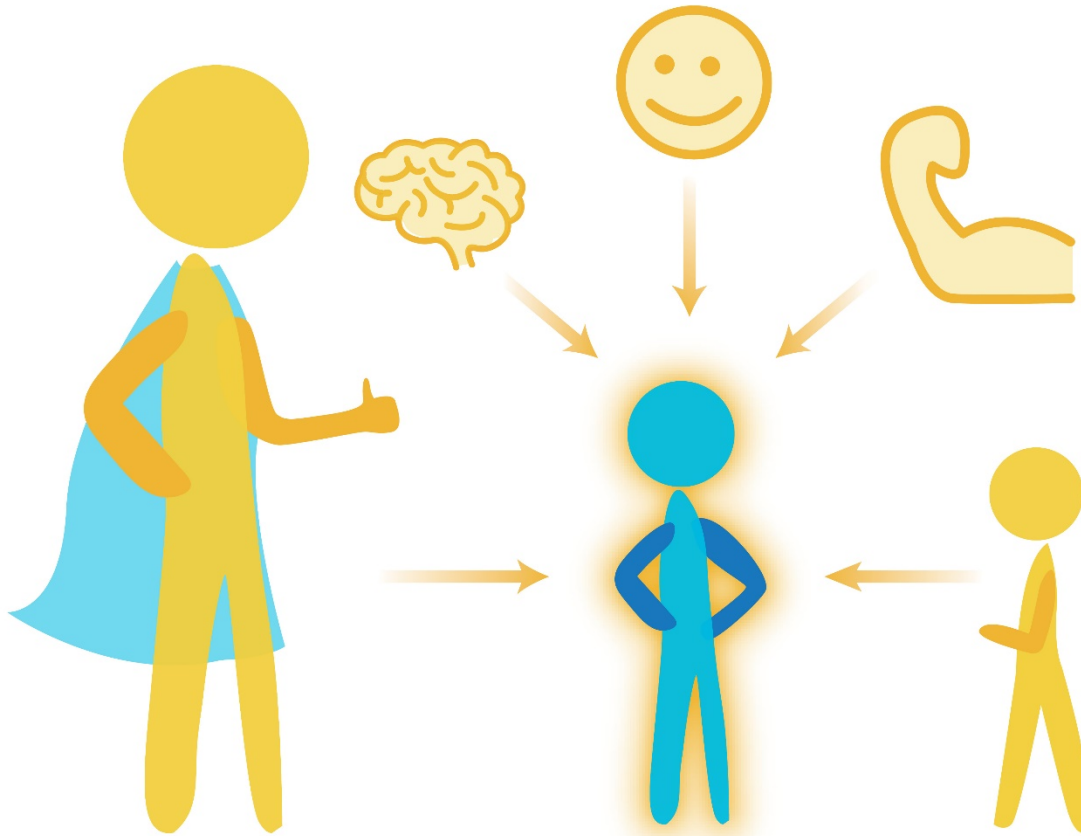


Figure from: Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (2012). Resilience in developmental psychopathology: Contributions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study. *Development and Psychopathology*, 24(2), 345–361.

RESILIENCE CAN stem from individual traits, interpersonal relationships, and environmental factors.

Resilience stems from:

- Positive emotions
- Self-esteem
- Emotion regulation and coping skills
- Self-control
- Close friendships
- Caring adults
- Specific biological factors like brain function, genetics, and hormone patterns



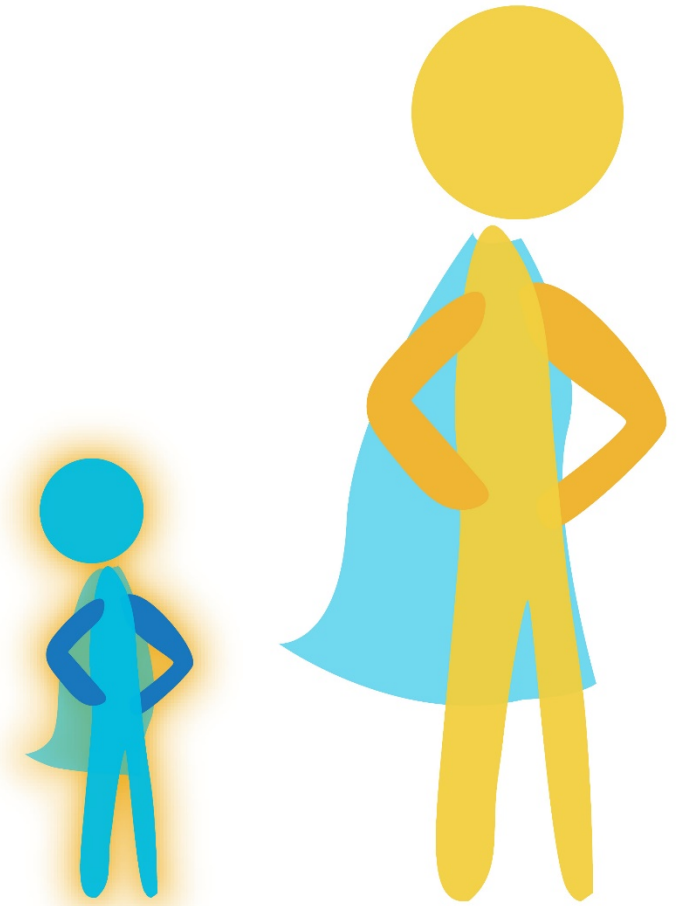
RESILIENCE IS ordinary.

The 'ingredients' for resilience are things that may seem quite ordinary, such as having a positive adult role model or being skilled at coping with tough emotions. Across studies, 10-25% of maltreated youth have resilient outcomes, but these percentages can vary based on how researchers specifically define resilience.

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RESILIENCE

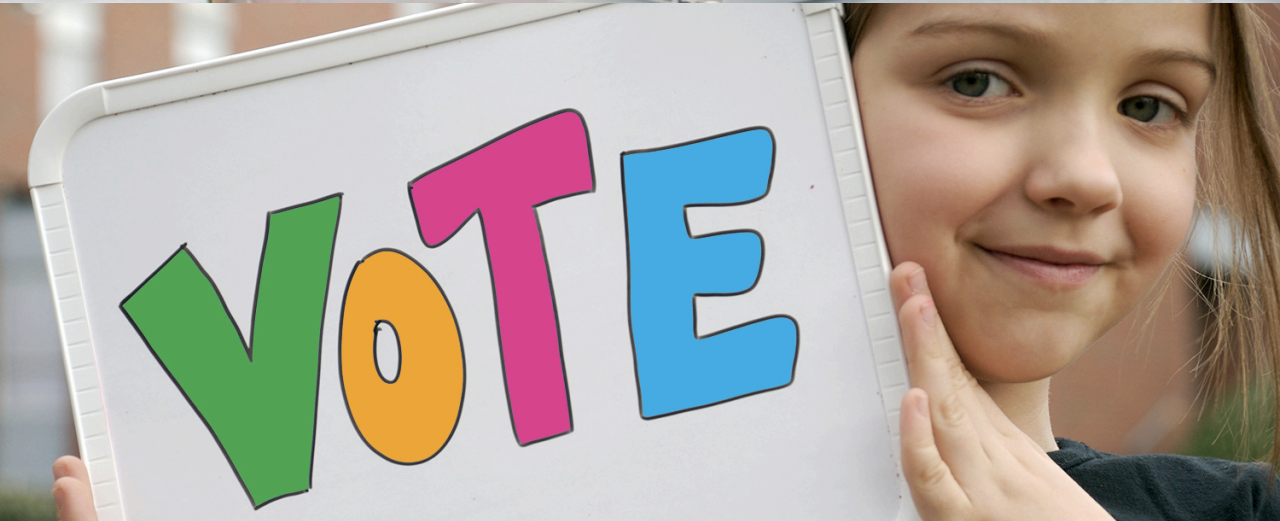
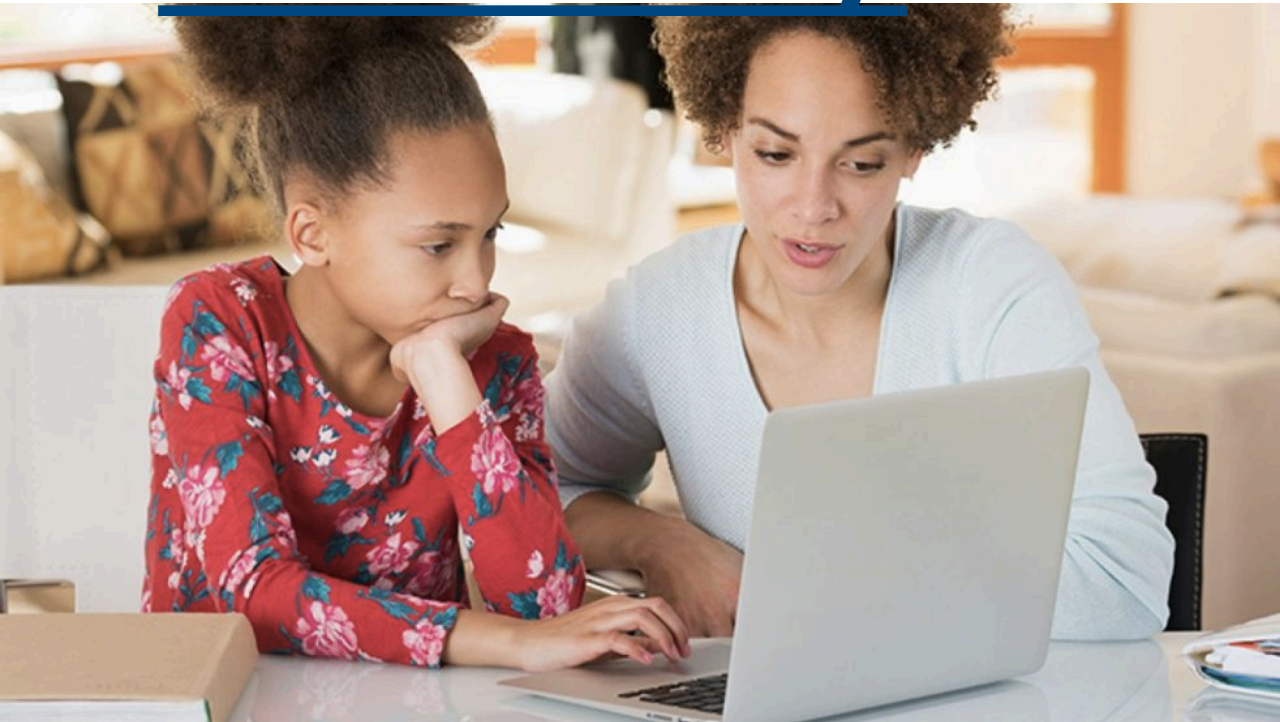
In Summary

RESILIENCE IS Not a Trait

RESILIENCE IS A Process

RESILIENCE IS Ordinary

Resilience is Ordinary



What is Resilience?

The attainment of desirable social and emotional adjustment despite exposure to considerable risk



Kids are Resilient; WE CAN BUILD RESILIENT KIDS



**Safety and
Security**



Connectedness



Calm and Comfort



**Self-
Empowerment &
Hope**

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Promote Safety & Security

What Does This Mean?

- Be nurturing and affectionate – even more so during times of stress
- Be sensitive to children's individual triggers
- Offer Empathetic Reflection

What Can I Do?

- Routine, consistency, and predictability
- Alert others to possible triggers
- Give advanced warning if you know something might be triggering



Focus on The Child's Needs

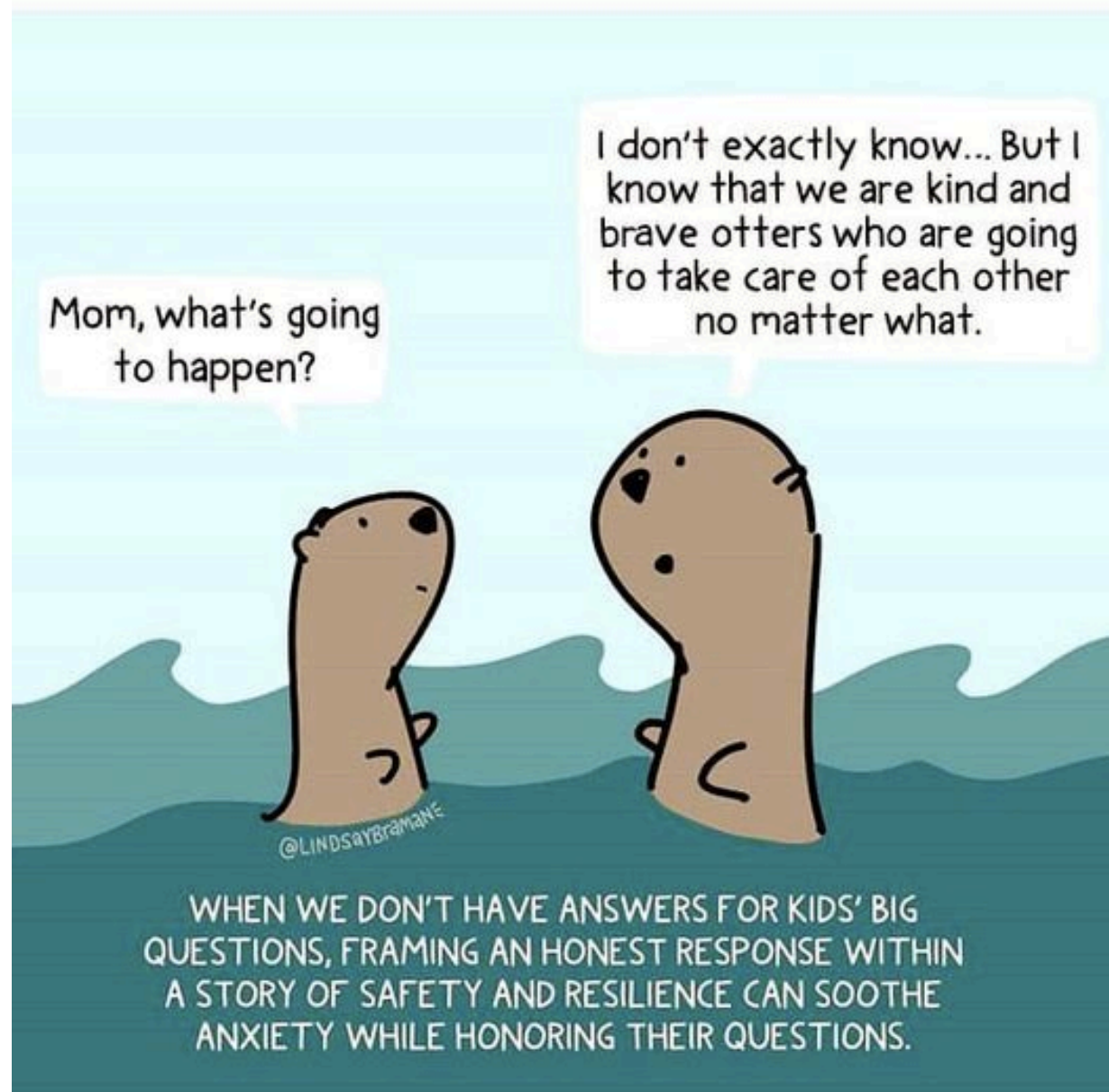
What Does This Mean?

Consider what 2 – 3 additional supports are most necessary for your child's learning, and partner with your school to help enact them

What Can Parents Do?

Work with the team to identify ways to support your child

- **Emotional Support:** Counselors, coping strategies, managing remote meltdowns/refusals
- **Organizational Support:** Help writing down assignments, using online agendas, password keepers, etc
- **Learning Supports:** E-mailed copies of notes, recording lessons, questions provided ahead of time
- **Managing Screen Time:** Printable worksheets? Adapted time on screen?
- **Extra services and resources:** Distance learning plans, resource room, special assistance



WHEN WE DON'T HAVE ANSWERS FOR KIDS' BIG QUESTIONS, FRAMING AN HONEST RESPONSE WITHIN A STORY OF SAFETY AND RESILIENCE CAN SOOTHE ANXIETY WHILE HONORING THEIR QUESTIONS.



Build Connections with Family & Community

What Does This Mean? What do We do?

- Plan opportunities for high-quality family togetherness
- Learn about your family's culture and traditions, and practice them often
- Daily rituals like bedtime, stories, games, cooking – all comforting
- Play a game together instead of watching a movie
- Family Book Clubs and Game Nights
- Videochat and letter-writing with Grandma & Grandpa, Auntie, Uncle, etc

<https://www.romper.com/p/20-video-chat-activities-for-grandparents-kids-of-all-ages-22818261>



Foster Relationships with School

What Does This Mean?

Warm and trusting relationships with adults are the foundation for learning, motivation, and resilience

Friendships are also important for learning and development, and kids thrive on social interactions with their peers

What Can Parents Do?

Help Teachers know your child's needs

- What COVID-19 was like for your child
- Identify child's strengths, challenges, and strategies

Regular temperature-checks

- Share observations you have of their child as he or she navigates this new normal; Ask teachers to share their observations with you as well

Share ideas for how teachers can best support your children

Strategies
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHALLENGES THAT YOU OR YOUR STUDENT ARE EXPERIENCING THAT YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF TO BETTER SUPPORT YOU?

--



Be Persistent, but Also Patient

What Does This Mean?

Teaching and learning during this coronavirus pandemic is so far from typical. It's literally nothing school systems have ever done before. Parents may have to be even more proactive and persistent than usual.

What Can Parents Do?

- ***Be understanding, Patient, & Kind:*** Most educators truly want to help your child - Expressing understanding, empathy, and kindness goes a long way.
- ***Focus on your child's goals:*** If something's not working, make sure people know it. Ask for help.
- ***Keep records and notes:*** This helps everyone stay on the same page, collects data, and allows you to advocate for additional resources if needed.

School communication log

Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> In person
Who initiated:	Who participated, received, or attended:				
What prompted the communication:					
What was discussed:					
What was decided:					

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Lay the Groundwork for Solid Collaboration

What Does This Mean?

Stay in touch with your child's teacher, and work together to proactively address issues should they come up – and before they become large problems.

What Can Parents Do?

Now: Let your child's teacher *and team* know about the highs- and lows of their experiences with learning this year

Now: Discuss their strengths and challenges, as well as strategies to overcome, given the current learning scenario

Now: Discuss concerns and questions you may have, and what concerns and questions your teacher may have

Later: Continue this process of collaborative discussion –
Ask to bring in other school partners if needed

Writing down an agenda helps

Area to discuss	✓	✗	Notes/ways to help
Homework			
Understands assignments			
Finishes on time			
Turns in completed work			
Class participation			
Arrives prepared and on time			
Listens and follows directions			
Follows class rules			
Academics			
Makes progress in key areas			
Knows when to ask for help			
Doesn't give up too easily			
Social/emotional			
Gets along with other students			
Gets along with the teacher			
Can handle frustration			



Teach Calm & Comfort

Recognize Common Trauma Triggers and Responses

Flight	Fight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawing• Avoiding work• Avoiding others• Skipping class• Daydreaming, zoning out• Seeming to sleep• Hiding or wandering• Becoming disengaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acting out• Behaving aggressively• Acting silly• Exhibiting defiance• Being hyperactive• Arguing• Screaming/yelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Who cares” “What’s the point”• Having trouble thinking• Having trouble completing work• Having trouble participating• Giving a blank look• Feeling unable to move• Numbness, disconnection• Refusing to answer• Refusing to get needs met

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Teach Calm & Comfort

What Can I Do?

- Expect big behaviors during times of trigger and stress
- Respond supportively
 - Name feelings as you see them
 - Remind children (and yourself!) that ***all feelings are good feelings*** — and we can use strategies to calm big feelings
 - Use child and teen literature to normalize emotions & discuss hardship
- Frequent teaching and modeling of coping strategies
 - *Deep breathing, mindful coloring or drawing, listening to calming music, asking for help, taking breaks, and thinking positive thoughts*
 - What do you, as a parent, do to cope?? ***Do it with your child or teen.***



Teach Calm & Comfort



And consider, for a moment. . .

Think about a time your family experienced something difficult (can be big or small)

What helped you get through?

When it was over what, if anything, changed for your family?

More than just coping or surviving -
It's about bouncing forward



Foster Self-Empowerment & Hope



designed by freepik



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Empower kids to accomplish their goals, and give them the language, skill, and *space* to overcome obstacles





Foster Self-Empowerment & Hope

3 GOOD THINGS



Increased Resiliency as Easy as 1, 2, 3

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THE EXERCISE

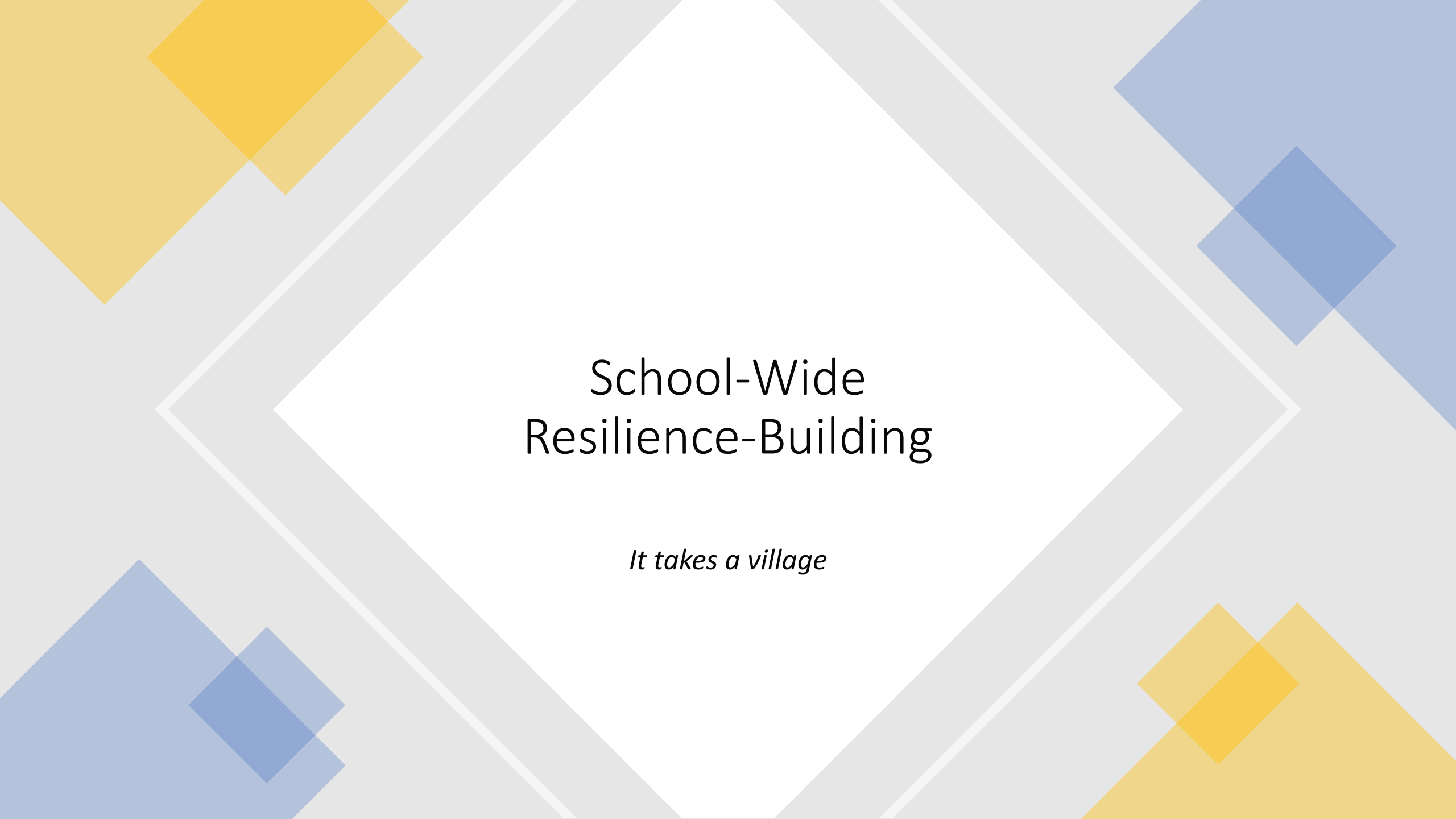
Just before sleep,
ask yourself:

‘What are three things
that went well today
and what was my role in
making them happen?’



• • • • •
You remember best what you've reviewed during your last two wakeful hours.

- For best results, write it down.
- Repeat for 2 weeks to make effects last longer.



School-Wide Resilience-Building

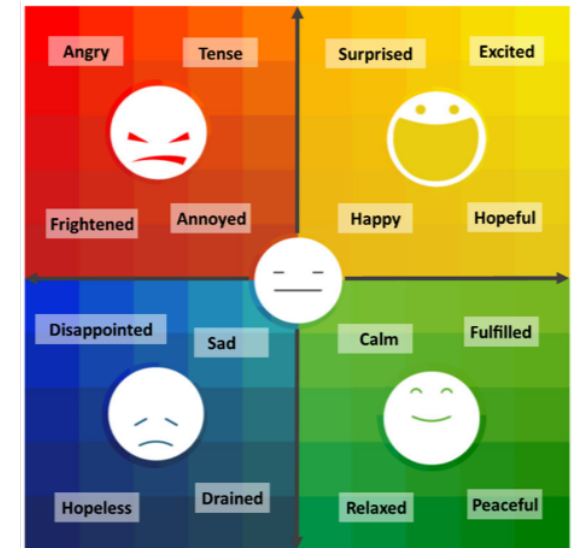
It takes a village

Expect Big (or Different) Emotions



What Can I Do?

- Remind kids, teens, parents (and yourself!) that feeling a ***range of “mixed” feelings is normal***— and we can use strategies to manage these emotions
- Model expressing emotions and include opportunities for self-awareness
- Foster connections through emotional “check-ins”
 - *Dialogue journal, mood meters, daily check-in or quick notes*
- Predictability, structure, and consistency
- Frequent modeling and practice of coping skills
 - *Music, journaling, physical activity, support from peers, mindful breathing*



Some Kids Might Struggle With Social Distance

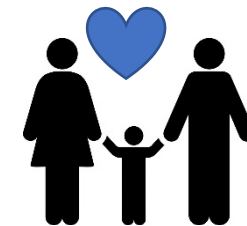


What Can I Do?

- **Explain rationale** behind social distance or masking
- **Recognize their sacrifices** and how play a part in protecting their family, friends, and school community
- **Elevate youth voice** – encourage teens to voice their thoughts, feelings, and needs
- **Validate kids' feelings** and remind them of coping strategies
- **Give teens choices**
 - Allow a mask break in a designated area
 - Phone a friend during lunch
- **Be clear about what you can and can't compromise**



Partner with Parents to Prepare Kids



What Does This Mean?

- Parents remain essential partners in ensuring students' health and wellness
- This is not a typical transition, and parents' worries and concerns are valid.

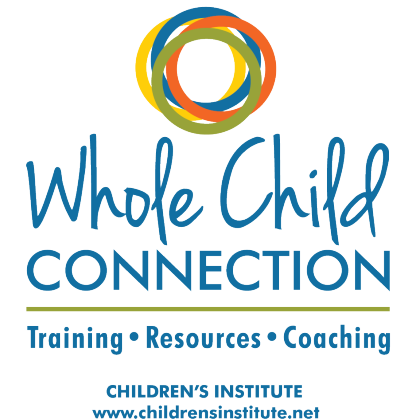
What Can I Do?

- Help with the 'new normal'
 - Help wearing masks, keeping distance, processing changes at school
 - Keep Calm, Carry On
- Communicate early, communicate often
 - Communicate *before* there's a problem
 - Find out parent's preferred mode of check-ins
- Weekly temperature-checks and check-ins
 - Share observations you have of their child as he or she navigates this new normal
 - Ask teachers to share their observations with you as well
- Share ideas for how school teams can best support your kid during this transition
 - Normalize common stress responses and offer strategies for coping



Social & Emotional Learning

Children who participate in SEL programs have better social skills, behavior and attitudes, as well as academic achievement gains of 11 percentile points, compared with children who did not participate (Weissberg et al., *Child Development*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 2011).



<https://casel.org/>

<https://www.childrensinstitute.net/whole-child-connection>



Targeted School-Based Interventions

Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET)

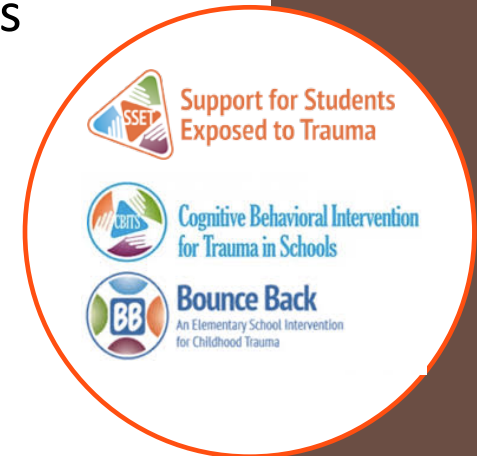
- Provides **educators and school counselors** with the tools and confidence to support trauma-exposed students, whether the trauma is environmental and chronic or is related to a single traumatic event.

Training is free and available online: <https://traumaawareschools.org/sset>

Bounce Back & Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)

- Training for **school mental health staff** in implementing school-based, group and individual interventions designed to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and behavioral problems, and to improve functioning, grades and attendance, peer and parent support, and coping skills

Trainings are free and available online: <https://traumaawareschools.org/cbits>
<http://bouncebackprogram.org/>



Assessing School Mental Health Supports and Trauma Responsiveness

- **The School Health Assessment & Performance Evaluation System (SHAPE System)**
 - Free and available at www.theshapesystem.com
- **The Trauma Responsive Schools Implementation Assessment (TRS-IA)**
 - Free and available at www.theshapesystem.com
- **Trauma Responsive Understanding Self-Assessment Tool for Schools (TRUST-S)**
 - Learn more at <https://trust-survey.com>



Final Thoughts for Everyone



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A silhouette of a person in a yoga pose, specifically the Tree Pose (Vrikshasana), stands on the left side of the frame. The person's right leg is raised and bent at the knee, with the foot resting on the left thigh. Their arms are raised, with hands clasped together above their head. The background is a vibrant sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the center of the sky, casting a warm orange and yellow light across the entire scene. The ocean below is dark with white-capped waves breaking. The horizon line is visible in the distance.

**"Although the world is full of suffering, it
is also full of the overcoming of it."**

- Hellen Keller -

Resilience Planning

- In prep for upcoming stressful situations (midterms, finals)
- In response to ongoing crisis
- When surrounded by loved ones who don't necessarily agree with you
- While pushing through to the finish-line
- Coping with differences in opinion and thoughts

Plan Ahead

A large yellow triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.



Resiliency Planning *(for ourselves)*

“We have an obligation to our children, as well as to ourselves, our colleagues and our loved ones, not to be damaged by the work we do.”

- Pearlman and Saakvitne

Be Gentle With Yourself



What Does This Mean?

- **Parent & family wellness** is the greatest predictor of children's wellness
- Educators who work with youth with ACES are at higher risk of secondary traumatic stress and burnout

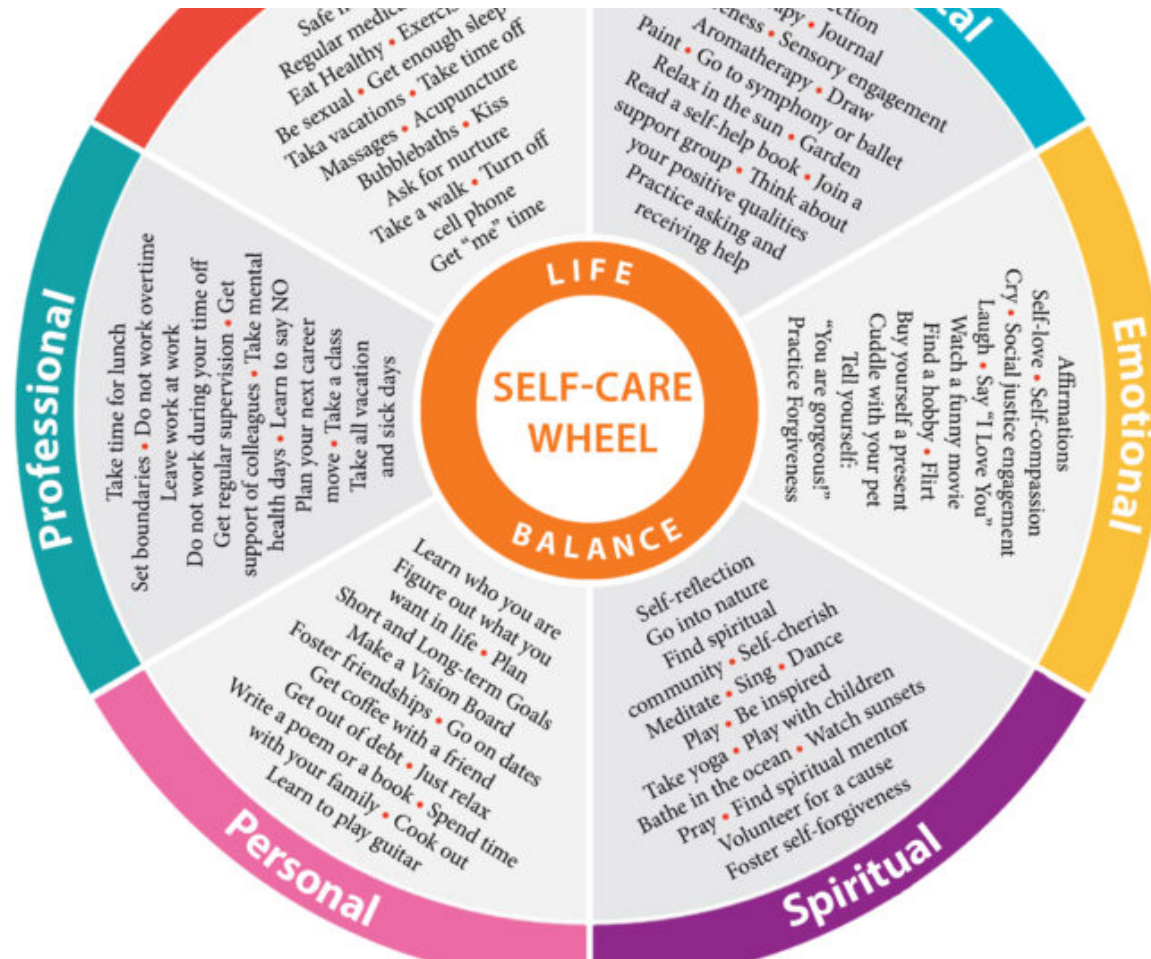
What Can I Do?

- **Protect Yourself:** Be aware of the signs of stress, exhaustion, and burnout and take action *early*
- Proactively develop a “**Personal Resiliency Plan**”



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What commitments will you make today to taking care of yourself ...



What kind(s) of support do you need to succeed at making your wellness a priority?

Be Gentle With Others



What Does This Mean?

- **Sometimes we all need help and peer support** – commit to helping each other through this difficult time
- **Helping others** is also a great way to build our own sense of meaning, control, and self-efficacy
- **Be understanding, Patient, & Kind:** Teaching, learning, and parenting during this coronavirus pandemic is so far from typical. It's literally nothing anyone has ever done before.

What Can I Do?

- Check in on each other
- Hold each other accountable for self-care
- Express gratitude (about life, students, each other)
- Take time to laugh
- Pay attention to each others' nonverbal cues (especially changes in these)
- **Lend each other support:** Weekly support calls for social support, problem-solving, and logistics



And it's OK to ask for help, too



Teachers, Coaches, Principals, School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, Behavior Specialists

- Reach out - They're here for you and your kids!

Talk to your Pediatrician

- Local pediatricians are very well-versed in child behavioral health

Child, Teen, & Family Behavioral Health

- **UR Medicine: Pediatric Behavioral Health & Wellness** – (585) 279-7800
- **Genesee Mental Health Center** – (585) 922-7770
- **Liberty Resources Behavioral Health** – (315) 498-5961
- **Catholic Family Center** – (585) 546-7220
- **Villa of Hope** – (585) 328-0834

Crisis Call Lines

- **Monroe County:** 211/Lifeline
- **NYS Mental Health Call Line:** 1-844-863-9314
- **UR Medicine: Behavioral Health Crisis Call Line** 585-275-8686
 - *Monday-Friday: 7 am - 8 pm; and Saturday, Sunday and Holidays: 10 am - 6:30 pm*

Excellent Resources



- [Children's Institute](#) has a host of tools for fostering resilience and Social & Emotional Learning
- [Kids Thrive585](#) offers family-friendly links to a wide variety of community resources.
- [United Way/211](#) can provide personalized support in navigating these many resources
- [UR Medicine Pediatric Behavioral Health & Wellness](#) has tools for families & school teams
- [Psychology Today](#) to identify private practitioners
- [Child Mind Institute](#) offers excellent evidence-based articles for families & school staff

And Remember:
You've Got This



Panelist Q&A

Melissa Heatly, Ph.D. - *Assistant Professor; PhD in Clinical & Developmental Psychology*

Dr. Aparajita “Tuma” Kuriyan, Ph.D. – *Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychologist*

Dr. Annalyn Gibson, MD – *Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist*

Jessica Wagner, LMHC – *Crisis Therapist, Pediatric Behavioral Health & Wellness*

R-H Moderator: Diane Wynne



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Dr. Melissa Heatly, Ph.D.

Questions, Comments – Reach out!

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