Tools for Educators During a Public Health Crisis

"It's the teacher that makes the difference, not the classroom."
- Michael Morpurg

Educators have been asked to fill many roles during this public health crisis. They have had to adjust to new learning environments, provide emotional support to students, maintain communication with parents, take care of themselves and their families, among other responsibilities. At the same time, they are experiencing the anxiety and worry about the public health crisis along with the rest of the community. Here are some tools to help.

**TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF**

It's natural to feel stressed, worried, anxious, and overwhelmed during a public health emergency, but there are steps you can take to build your wellness.

**1. BODY**
- Be physically active or exercise regularly
- Eat well, maintain a healthy diet, drink water
- Get a good night's rest, keep a routine sleep schedule
- Relax your body with breathing exercises and stretching

**2. MIND**
- Engage in activities or hobbies you enjoy
- Try as much as possible to maintain a daily routine
- Meditate or pray as a way to relax and find support
- Take breaks throughout the day

**3. EMOTIONS**
- Notice and accept how you feel, try not to judge your feelings
- Treat yourself with compassion and understanding
- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust
- Use calming self-talk (“I can handle this”, “One day at a time”)

**4. SUPPORT**
- Reach out to others by calling, texting, email, social media
- Use FaceTime, Skype, or other video tools to talk “face-to-face”
- Talk about the emergency, but also enjoy other conversation
- Ask for help when needed from friends/family or professionals

**STAYING INFORMED WITHOUT STRESSING OUT**

While it's important to stay up to date with the most current information regarding the public health emergency, you don't want to overwhelm yourself with news or media that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. What can you do?

**AVOID** excessive exposure to media coverage

**LIMIT** your media exposure to a single credible source

**CHECK** for information updates at a specific time only once or twice a day

**GATHER** information that allows you to take practical steps to protect yourself and your loved ones

Access Reliable Information: www.cdc.gov | samhsa.gov/coronavirus

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If you or someone you know needs help due to overwhelming sadness, depression, anxiety, or feelings that you want to harm yourself or others, reach out.

**SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline**
800-985-5990
Text Talk with Us to 66746
TTY 800-846-8517

**SAMHSA’s National Helpline**
800-662-HELP
National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-SAFE

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
800-273-TALK
TTY 800-799-4TTY (4889)

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**COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS**

Parents are also experiencing increased stress due to disruptions in their daily routine and the new demands of homeschooling.

Listen to parents’ concerns with empathy - hear them out and reflect back their concerns.

Acknowledge their anxieties during this time without judgement - this is new to them and they may feel ill-equipped and unprepared.

**ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES**

Try to maintain set work hours - establish a schedule that takes into account your work and home responsibilities, trying to keep some balance.

Communicate your work hours and when you can be available to parents and students.

You may not be able to respond to all communications immediately - let people know you will respond during your scheduled work hours.

**COPING STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS & STUDENTS**

Facilitate a mutual support group among parents/caregivers during this time or ask a parent or other school staff to do so.

Provide parents and students wellness tips and strategies to use during this time.

Hold group meetings at a set time and invite parents and/or students so you can address general questions and concerns all at once.

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*Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet is meant to provide an example and does not imply endorsement by the Northeast and Caribbean MHTTC.*

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