3-PART WEBINAR SERIES

Supporting Latinx Students and Caregivers Emotional and Mental Health Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Part 1
The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

**Strengths-based and hopeful**

**Inclusive and accepting of diverse cultures, genders, perspectives, and experiences**

**Healing-centered/trauma-responsive**

**Inviting to individuals participating in their own journeys**

**Person-first and free of labels**

**Non-judgmental and avoiding assumptions**

**Respectful, clear and understandable**

**Consistent with our actions, policies, and products**

Social distancing: Dealing with the emotional aftermath of being away from others

Patricia L. Landers Santiago, MEd, PsyD
September 15, 2020
1:00 PM
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Authors Disclose Conflicts of Interest

I declare no conflict of interest in this presentation.
Objectives

• Learn the meaning of social distancing and the importance of practicing it during present time.

• Learn the difference between social distancing and social disconnection.

• Provide strategies to deal with the emotional aftermath of being away from others.
“A disaster (which originally meant ‘ill-starred’, or ‘under a bad star’) changes the world and our view of it. Our focus shifts, and what matters shifts.”

(Solnit 2020)
COVID-19 and Latinx families in the U.S.

Socioeconomic Barriers Place Latinx Families at Increased Risk

- Employment
- Housing
- Higher rates of transmission among Latinx ages 40-59
- Latinx children are being diagnosed at higher rates with multisystem inflammatory syndrome, a serious disease linked to COVID-19
- Limited access to health care.

Lopez, Barajas-Gonzalez, Diaz, Moreno & Garcia-Coll, 2020
COVID-19 and Latinx families in the U.S.

Latinx Children and Families Experience Chronic Stressors

- Exposed to trauma and stress
- Assume greater responsibilities in their households which increases risk for anxiety and depression
- Poverty
- Higher food insecurity
- Disproportionately impacted by policing and deportations.

Lopez, Barajas-Gonzalez, Diaz, Moreno & Garcia-Coll, 2020
COVID-19 and Latinx families in the U.S.

Educational Barriers for Latinx Families Exacerbate Learning and Language Gaps

• 27% of students in U.S. schools are Latinx
• 75% in K-12 schools are English Learners
• Latinx caregivers have lower levels of education, may have limited knowledge of the U.S. educational system and may struggle reading English, and are unable to help children with their schoolwork.

Lopez, Barajas-Gonzalez, Diaz, Moreno & Garcia-Coll, 2020
What is Social Distancing?
Social distancing

- Social distance refers to the extent to which people experience a sense of familiarity (nearness and intimacy) or unfamiliarity (farness and difference) between themselves and people belonging to different social, ethnic, occupational, and religious groups from their own.
Social distancing (CDC, 2020)

• Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not from your household.

• To practice social or physical distancing, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces.
Why practice social distancing?

- Avoid spread
- Staying safe
- Protecting the vulnerable
- Following rules
Difference

Social distancing

Disconnection
Social distancing

Don'ts

• Gatherings
• Hugs
• Gyms
• Movie theaters

Do’s

• Virtual
  • Meetings
  • Coffee breaks
  • Exercise sessions
  • Book clubs
Explaining social distancing to children

“Children probably don’t fully understand why parents/guardians aren’t allowing them to be with friends. Tell your child that your family is following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which include social distancing. Social distancing means staying away from others until the risk of contracting COVID-19 is under control. Showing older children the "flatten the curve" charts will help them grasp the significance of social distancing. Explain that while we don't know how long it will take to "flatten the curve" to reduce the number of those infected, we do know that this is a critical time—we must follow the guidelines of health experts to do our part.”
Emotional Aftermath

How does social distancing affect us emotionally?
Emotional aftermath

Emotions

- “a complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioral and physiological elements.” (APA)
Emotional aftermath

Emotions

- innate
- vary in intensity
- differ from actions
- good nor bad
- nor bad
# Emotional aftermath

## Emotions
- Happy
- Sad
- Angry
- Worry
- Scared
- Excited

## Actions
- Laugh
- Cry
- Scream, throw things
- Bite nails, walk around
- Tremble, cry
- Jump, scream
Emotional aftermath

- Most common symptoms

- isolation/
  lack of energy

- sadness

- sensible

- crankiness

- anger
Emotional aftermath

• Recognizing expected reactions
  • Important to understand that there are symptoms that are totally normal.
    • For example:
      • Being quarantined for a month can make someone sad or cranky.

• Focus more on actions
  • How do I or others respond to being quarantined?
Emotional aftermath

• Warning signs
  • Change in eating habits
  • Constant bad humor
  • Isolation
  • Lack of energy
  • Low tolerance
  • Negative or pessimist expressions
  • Mood changes
Recommendations
Recommendations

• Control vs. no control

What I can’t control

What I can control
Control vs. No Control

• I want to...
  • Visit my parents/family/Friends
  • Celebrate my friends’ special moment
  • Travel abroad

• I can’t...
  • Risk their well-being
  • Participate in group gatherings
  • Put myself at risk

Frustration VS. Acceptance
Follow a schedule

Identify “hours of operation”
Assign activities for each hour
Plan ahead
include variety of activities
Space for:
• Meals
• Resting/naps
• Fun
• Nothing or all
Connect with others

Children
• Virtual breaks between classes.
• Chats (supervised)
• Watch movies (virtually)
• Play games (virtually)
• Write letters/emails
• Video calls
• Drive-thru

Adults
• Virtual weekly meetings
• Virtual book clubs
• Video calls
• Conference calls
• Phone calls
• Themed meetings
Recognize and validate emotions

• Emotions are natural responses and totally expected according to the situations.

• Recognize your emotions:
  • “I am angry”
  • “I feel sad”

• Validate your emotions
  • “It’s ok to feel this way”
  • “Anyone can feel sad sometime”

• Separate emotions from actions
  • “I am sad, but I’m going to connect with my friends”
  • “I am angry, but I’m going to fix a nice dinner”
Focus on the positive

• Difficult moments always bring learning experiences:
  • Know yourself better
  • Things you’re good at
  • Time to explore new hobbies

• Focus on what you have vs what you need or don’t have.

• Give yourself some credit for what you’re doing.
Identify time for yourself

• Include a time slot in schedule for “me time”

• Disconnect from phones, social media, other people, regular chores.

• Be consistent (days & times)

• It’s okay to be quiet and do nothing at all

• Reflect on accomplishments

• Do something you love/enjoy
Ask for HELP

• It’s okay to seek for help
• Identify available resources
  • Family
  • Friends
  • Coworkers
  • Other parents
  • Peers
  • Support groups

• Mental health professionals
• Main physician
• Crisis hotline
Policy and Practice Implications

What schools can do to lower the impact of COVID-19 pandemic?

• Plan opening of schools serving Latinx children for in-person learning.
• Seek funding to provide stable high-speed internet and necessary technology.
• Provide access to personal protective equipment (PPE).
• Prioritize sanitation.
• Maintain low student-teacher ratios.
• Provide sufficient materials for individual student access.
• Offer flexible work and attendance options.

Lopez, Barajas-Gonzalez, Diaz, Moreno & Garcia-Coll, 2020
Policy and Practice Implications

• Provide training on high quality in-person and online learning instructional practices to support Latinx children’s language and academic needs.
• Implement and expand dual language education.
• Ensure that teachers/staff proactively assess Latinx students’ and families’ technology access.
• Support student's socio-emotional needs via regular online or phone check-ins.
• Employ bilingual/bicultural social workers and school psychologists.

Lopez, Barajas-Gonzalez, Diaz, Moreno & Garcia-Coll, 2020
Policy and Practice Implications

• Provide evidence-based, culturally and linguistically appropriate, trauma-informed school-based mental health services for students and teachers.

• Ensure children have access to free meal programs during school closures.

Lopez, Barajas-Gonzalez, Diaz, Moreno & Garcia-Coll, 2020
QUESTIONS?

Thank you!!!
References


Next in the series

Part 2
Strategies for managing emotions in children, adolescents, and caregivers during COVID-19 pandemic

September 22nd
1:00-2:30 PM Eastern Time

Part 3
Grieving process: Dealing with loss during the Pandemic

September 29th
1:00-2:30 PM Eastern Time
UPCOMING WEBINARS

September 17th - The Intersection of Racism, Discrimination, and Mental Health in Communities of Color

October 2nd - The Evolution of Latino Identities and Mental Health

1:00-2:30 PM Eastern Time
Your opinion is important to us!
We encourage you to participate of the 3-part webinar series to obtain a certificate of participation after completing the evaluation form.

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