

Youth, Social Distancing, and Anxiety in the time of COVID-19

Angela Begres, MSW, LCSW

Great Lakes Mental Health
Technology Transfer Center
February 22, 2021

Brought To You By:



The Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC are funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) under the following cooperative agreements:

Great Lakes ATTC: 1H79TI080207-03

Great Lakes MHTTC: 1H79SM-081733-01

Great Lakes PTTC: 1H79SP081002-01

Disclaimer

This presentation was prepared for the Great Lakes PTTC under a cooperative agreement from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). All material appearing in this presentation, except that taken directly from copyrighted sources, is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA or the authors. Citation of the source is appreciated. Do not reproduce or distribute this presentation for a fee without specific, written authorization from the Great Lakes PTTC.

At the time of this presentation, CAPT (USPHS) Meena Vythilingam served as SAMHSA Assistant Secretary. The opinions expressed herein are the views of the speakers and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, for the opinions described in this document is intended or should be inferred.

January 2021

MHTTC Words Matter

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

Adapted from: https://mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Recovery-Oriented-Language-Guida_2019ed_v1_20190809-Web.pdf



Thank You for Joining Us!

A few housekeeping items:

- If you are having technical issues, please individually message Stephanie Behlman in the **chat section at the bottom of your screen** and they will be happy to assist you.
- Please put any questions for the speaker in the **Q & A section, also at the bottom of the screen**. The speaker will respond to questions.

Thank You for Joining Us!

A few more housekeeping items:

- You will be directed to a link at the end of the presentation to a very short survey – we would really appreciate it if you could fill it out. It takes about 3 minutes.
- The recording of this webinar along with the slides will be available on our website.
- Certificates of attendance will be sent out to all who attended the full session. They will be sent via email.

A close-up photograph of several social media icons on white, 3D keyboard keys. The icons include Pinterest (red circle with white 'P'), Snapchat (yellow square with white ghost), Instagram (purple and pink gradient camera icon), Facebook (blue square with white 'f'), and Twitter (blue bird). The keys are arranged in a grid, and the background is a dark, textured surface.

Follow Us On Social Media!

Facebook and Twitter:

- @GreatLakesATTC
- @GMhttc
- @GLPTTC

Presenter



Angela Begres

Youth, Social Distancing, and Anxiety in the time of COVID-19

Angela Begres, LMSW



Partners for Healthy Lives

Learning objectives:



- Define stress and anxiety
- Explain the difference between stress and anxiety
- Describe how anxiety affects the body
- Learn about the impact of COVID-19 to feelings of isolation and anxiety
- Discuss strategies to support youth



Take care of yourself first

- Check in with yourself first, before you help others
- Practice calming strategies
- Practice self-care
- Talk to others
- Breath

Notice and
accept how
you feel



What is your self talk?



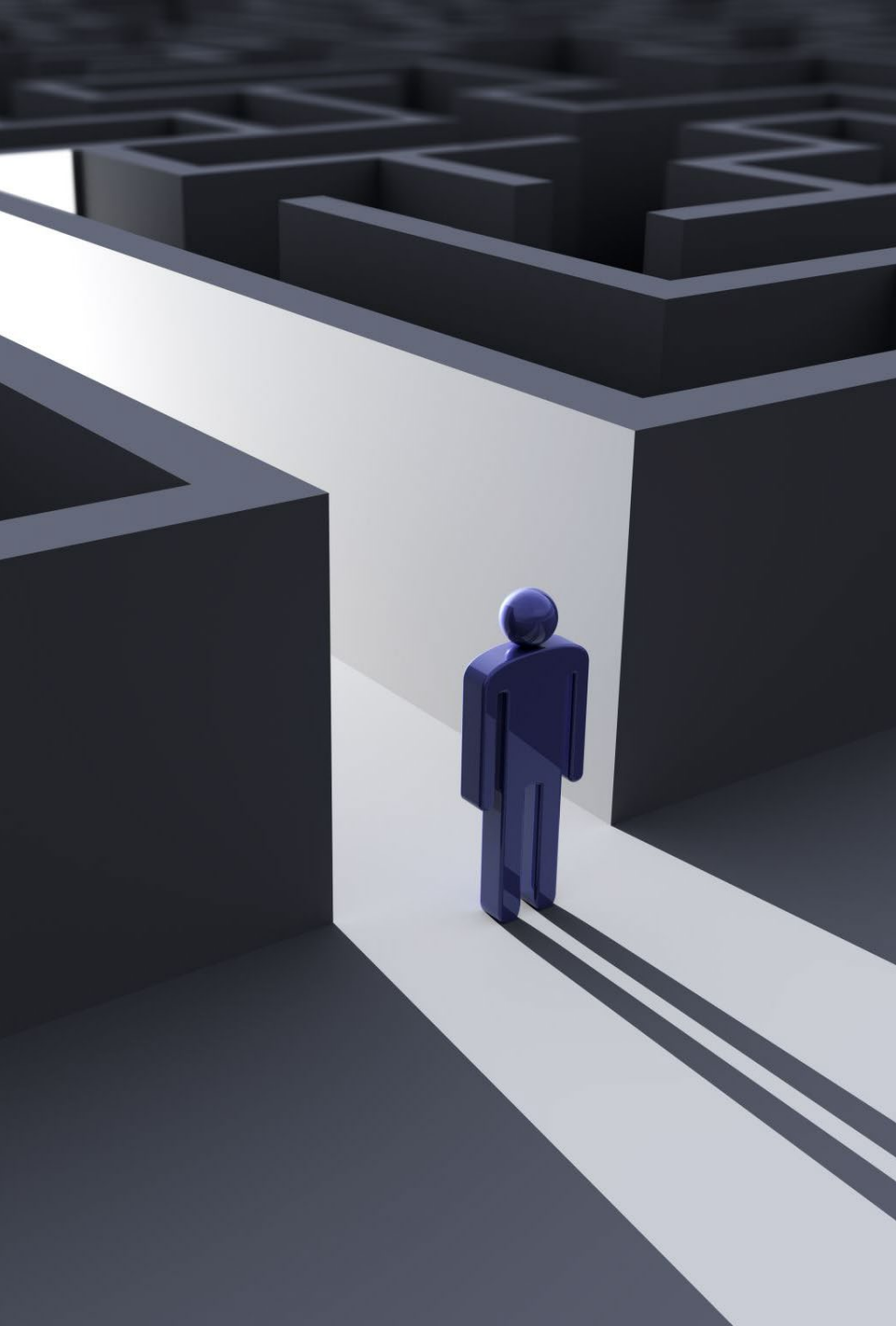
What stories do you
tell yourself?



Positive reframing or
positive self talk?

In the chat box, share a helpful strategy you've used to manage your anxiety during this time.

Your strategies can help another community member!



What is stress?

- Stress is anything a person “perceives” to be a threat
- The term “perception” can vary widely from person to person
- Stress is an external treat- such as a mountain lion standing in your path
- Stress is also the body’s reaction to the external threat. Once the threat goes away, stress should go away

Stress in youth:

Change in sleeping or eating patterns

Increased aches and pains

Increased focus on their body

Difficulty separating

Withdrawal

What is anxiety?

Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety from time to time.

Anxiety can be described as a sense of uneasiness, nervousness, worry, fear, or dread of what's about to happen or what might happen.

While **fear** is the emotion we feel in the presence of threat, **anxiety** is a sense of anticipated danger, trouble, or threat.

Anxiety disorders are mental health conditions that involve excessive amounts of anxiety, fear, nervousness, worry, or dread.

Anxiety that is too constant or too intense can cause a person to feel preoccupied, distracted, tense, and always on alert.

Nearly **1 in 3** of all adolescents ages 13-18 will experience an **Anxiety disorder**, and **70%** of teens describe **anxiety as a major problem** for people their age

Preliminary data from Penn State teen anxiety study reinforces this striking pattern of growing anxiety. Compared to pre-COVID-19, anxiety severity among their respondents has increased 29%, largely driven by significantly heightened generalized anxiety (up 45%) and school anxiety (up 143%)

Types of anxiety disorders

- **Generalized anxiety:** Excessive worry about a variety of things such as grades, family issues, relationships with peers, and performance in sports
- **Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD):** Unwanted and intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and feeling compelled to repeatedly perform rituals and routines (compulsions) to try and ease anxiety
- **Social Phobia (social anxiety):** An intense fear of social and performance situations and activities such as being called on in class or starting a conversation with a peer
- **Panic Disorder:** Panic disorder is diagnosed if a youth suffers at least two unexpected panic or anxiety attacks—which means they come on suddenly and for no reason—followed by at least one month of concern over having another attack, losing control, or "going crazy"
- **Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** Intense fear and anxiety, become emotionally numb or easily irritable, or avoid places, people, or activities after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic or life-threatening event

How anxiety affect the body

- Physical changes:
 - Frequent headaches, including migraines
 - Gastrointestinal problems
 - Unexplained aches and pains
 - Excessive fatigue
 - Sleep disturbance
- Emotional changes:
 - Feeling on edge
 - Irritability
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Restlessness
 - Unexplained outburst
- Social changes
 - Avoiding social interactions with usual friends
 - Avoiding extracurricular activities
 - Isolating from peer group
 - Spending increase time alone
- Poor school performance
 - Significant drop in grades
 - Frequent missed assignments
 - Describes feeling overwhelmed by workload
 - Procrastination

Symptoms of a panic attack

- Rapid heartbeat
- Sweating and trembling
- Dizziness
- Upset stomach
- Difficult breathing
- Chest pain
- Feeling like they're "dying"
- Feeling like they're "going crazy"
- Numbness or tingling in arms and legs
- Derealization

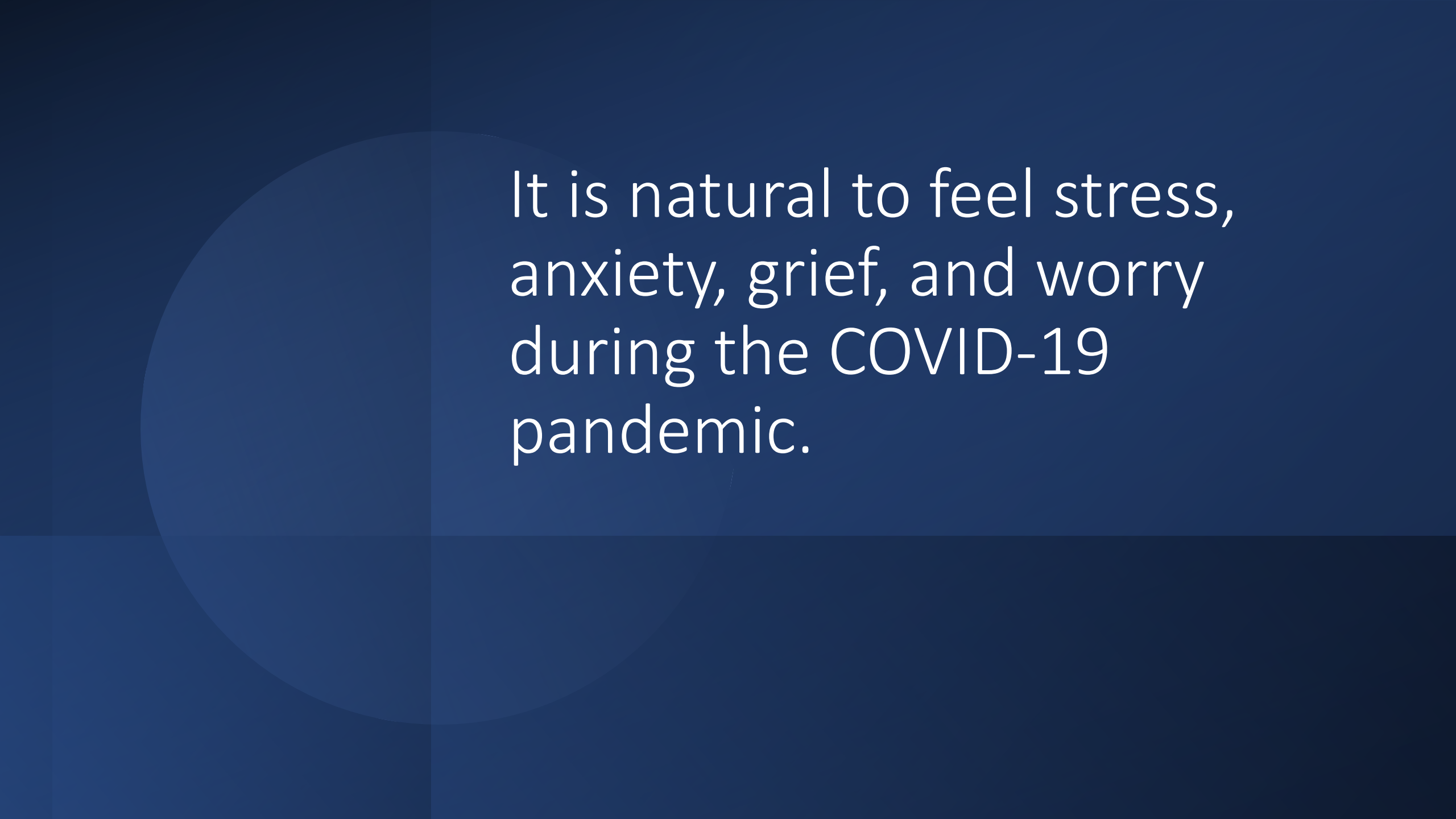
Anxiety is not always negative

- Although anxiety can have detrimental effects, it may not be entirely negative. Anxiety also creates healthy stress that can motivate people to fulfill tasks, accomplish goals and achieve their best results.
- This type of anxiety is known as **Eustress**, or healthy stress which can energize you and boost your motivation. Without stress, we might not have the ambition and drive we need to work towards our goals.
- When managed correctly anxiety can be used to ramp up our performance.



How to have a discussion with your teen about mood

- Chose the right time. Know how to pick your opportunities
- Stick to the facts. You cannot know what is going on inside your teen's mind
- Validate. Let your teen know that you can see how hard things have been for them lately
- Self-disclose. If you have ever experienced anxiety or know someone who has, sharing can be a powerful tool in this contestation
- Be ready for push-back



It is natural to feel stress,
anxiety, grief, and worry
during the COVID-19
pandemic.

Living during COVID-19 Pandemic

The treat of a virus can trigger mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

This may lead to fear of being contaminated with the virus or obsessive-compulsive tendencies such as excessive handwashing.



Strategies to help youth's dysfunctional thinking pattern

- **Media distancing:** To stop the spread of COVID-19, we've had to practice social distancing. But to stop the spread of anxiety, we must distance ourselves from the media.
- **Do not engage with worry. Take action:** You can't stop thoughts from entering your mind, but you can choose to stop dwelling and you can choose to take action to solve problems. There is a huge difference between worrying and problem solving.
- **Focus on present odds:** All deaths are tragic, and the coronavirus can be deadly but maintaining proper perspective can reduce your anxiety. No doubt the symptoms of COVID-19 can be horrible, but most people infected with COVID-19 have mild to moderate symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- **Do not react to physical symptoms:** If you cough, it does not mean you have the COVID-19. The same is true for others who cough.
- **Focus on being productive and new ways of enjoying life:** Although we have no control over the national crisis, we must focus on where we do have control – our response to the crisis. This is an opportunity to try something new.
- **Engage in stress reduction activities:** Focusing on what you are grateful for, exercising your body, and relaxing your mind.
- **Preserve some sense of normalcy:** maintaining a structure to your day with some balance of normalcy will help reduce anxiety.
- **Be kind to yourself and others:** Don't be hard on yourself. Reaching out to relatives and friends who are isolated or in need will boost their spirits and yours.
- **Seek out professional help:** You don't need to do this alone. If you are experiencing an escalation of anxiety, talk to a professional who can help you through this difficult time.



Supporting youth

- Discuss the situation at their level
- Take your cues from them
- Ask instead of assuming you know how they are feeling
- Reassure them with facts
- Discuss with them what you are doing/what they can do to stay safe
- Plan activities to do together

Building resilience



WE GAIN RESILIENCE
THROUGH THE UPS
AND DOWNS



SOCIAL SUPPORT



HOPE

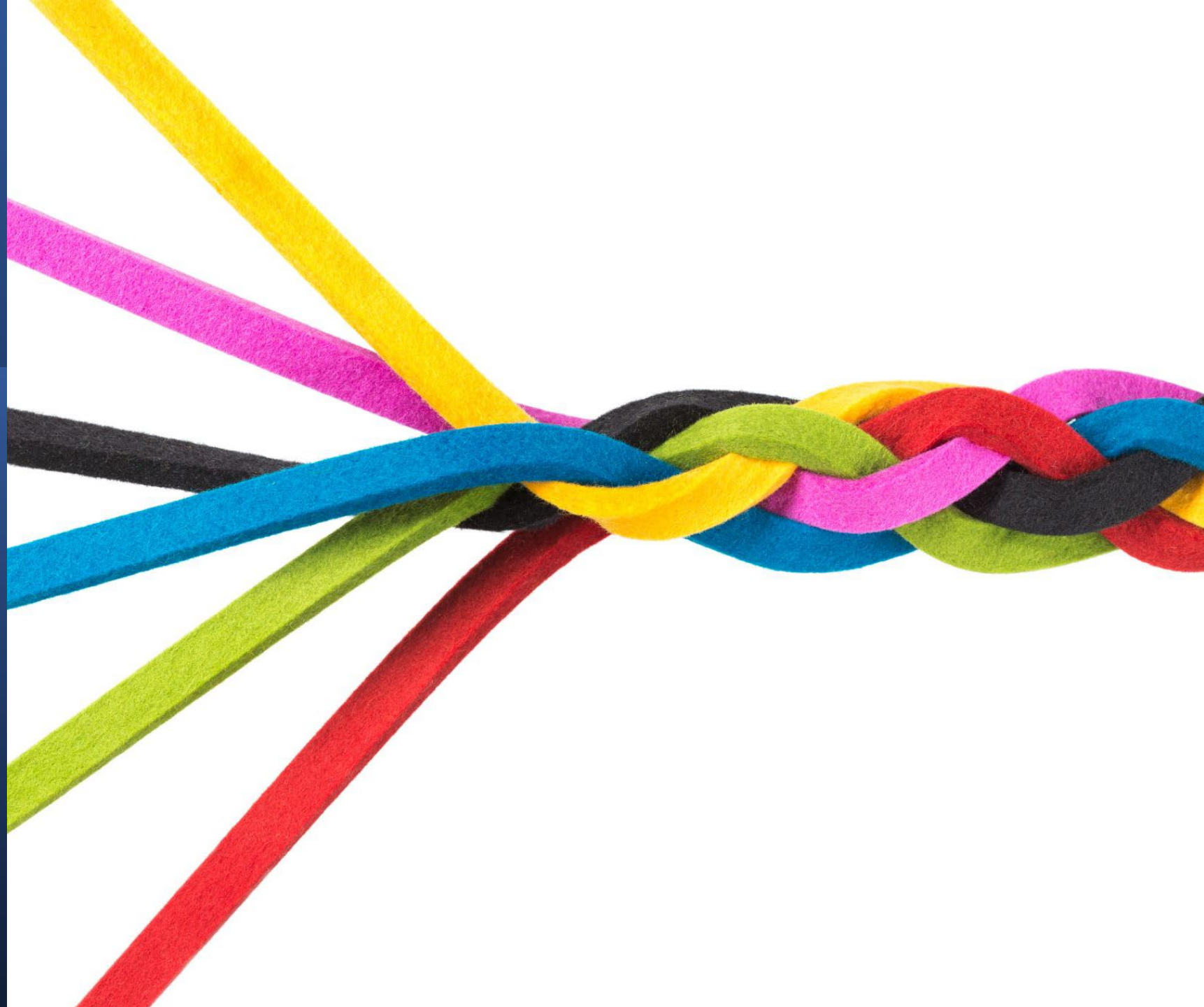


SELF-CARE



MAKING MEANING

Maintain
connections



Mindfulness techniques

- **Tense & Release:** Starting at your toes, pick one muscle and squeeze it tight. Count to five. Release, and notice how your body changes. Repeat exercise moving up your body
- **Belly Breathing:** Put one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. Slowly breathe in from your stomach (expand like a balloon) and slowly breathe out (deflate)
- **Mindful Meal:** Pay attention to the smell, taste and look of your food. No multitasking
- **Meditation:** Sit in a relaxed, comfortable position. Pick something to focus on, like your breath. When your mind wanders, bring your attention back to your breath
- **Blowing Bubbles:** Notice their shapes, textures and colors



Compassion

- Compassion—noticing others suffering and being motivated to provide relief to them
- Fostering compassion is important because it helps us recognize that even in time of hardship our common human response is not to show reckless disregard of other, but to show compassion
- There are three strategies that can help increase youth's capacity for compassion:
 - Show compassion to kids so they can experience receiving it
 - Teach kids to practice self-compassion
 - Encourage kids to extend compassion to others

Thank you for joining.

Leave a note in the chat box with a strategies you learn from listing to me. What will you take with you today that will help you after this meeting



The background is a dark blue gradient. On the left side, there is a cluster of 3D question marks of various sizes, some appearing to be floating or stacked. A large, white, semi-circular shape is positioned on the right side of the image, partially overlapping the dark background.

Questions?

Resources

- **Findtreatment.gov**
- **National Helpline:** Treatment, referral, and information 24/7
 - <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline/>
 - 1800-662-Help (4357)
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
 - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
 - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- **Crisis Text Line**
 - www.crisistextline.org
 - Text “START” to 741-741

Stay in touch:

Email: Angela@partnersforhealthylives.org

Instagram: @Partnersforhealthylives

[Youth, Social Distancing, and Anxiety in the time of COVID-19 Handout](#)

References

- “Anxiety Disorders (for Teens) - Nemours KidsHealth.” *Nemours KidsHealth - the Web’s Most Visited Site about Children’s Health*, <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anxiety.html>.
- “Anxiety in Teens: The Hidden Signs of Teen Anxiety You Need to Know.” *Psycom.Net - Mental Health Treatment Resource Since 1996*, <https://www.psycom.net/hidden-signs-teen-anxiety/>.
- “Checking In on Your Teenager’s Mood During the COVID-19 Pandemic | NYU Langone News.” *NYU Langone News*, <https://nyulangone.org/news/checking-your-teenagers-mood-during-covid-19-pandemic>.
- “Coronavirus, Kids and Signs of Stress | Lifespan.” *Lifespan*, <https://www.lifespan.org/lifespan-living/coronavirus-kids-and-signs-stress>
- “How Mindfulness Can Help During COVID-19 | Child Mind Institute.” *Child Mind Institute*, <http://www.facebook.com/ChildMindInstitute>, <https://childmind.org/article/how-mindfulness-can-help-during-covid-19>.
- “How the Pandemic Can Teach Kids About Compassion.” *Greater Good*, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_the_pandemic_can_teach_kids_about_compassion.
- “Teens and Anxiety during COVID-19 | SSRI COVID-19 Resources.” *Home | SSRI COVID-19 Resources*, <https://covid-19.ssri.psu.edu/articles/teens-and-anxiety-during-covid-19>.
- “Top Ten COVID-19 Anxiety Reduction Strategies | Anxiety and Depression Association of America, ADAA.” *Home | Anxiety and Depression Association of America, ADAA*, <https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/top-ten-covid-19-anxiety-reduction-strategies>.