

NOW WHAT? HELPING OUR CHILDREN RESET WITH HEALTHY MINDS, BODIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

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A Journey to You...LLC**

OUTLINE

The Pandemic and Youth Mental Health

- Specific mental health struggles
- Changes
- Anxiety and Trauma Response
- Depression and Trauma Response
- Psychosomatic Symptoms

Where do we go from here?

- Common Struggles
- Technology
- Physical Activity Limitations
- Emotional Health and Steps to Responding
- Easing Anxiety and Worry
- Final Tips
- Resources available through our practice

A'S STORY

-17 year old female, Senior

-Missing out on extra curriculans and sports

-Feeling Isolated and removed from friends/social engagements

- Increased self awareness of struggles, low self esteem due to increased time to fixate on herself.

-Struggles with motivation

-Pushes away from family involvement, self isolates, begins fearing next steps.

THE PANDEMIC AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Direct Mental Health struggles:

- General Anxiety: *Increased by approximately 75%
- Social Anxiety: *Increased by approximately 33%
- Depression: *Rates of moderate or severe symptoms Doubled
- Grief and Loss
- Trauma
- Addiction (especially Technology)

Other Impacts:

- Mental Health of parents/guardians
- Academic and social changes and restrictions
- Domestic Violence
- Medical/Physical Health

*Hawes, M., Szency, A., Klein, D., Hajcak, G., & Nelson, B. (2021). Increases in depression and anxiety symptoms in adolescents and young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Medicine*, 1-9. doi:10.1017/S0033291720005358

"SO MANY CHANGES":

Changes that have occurred for our kids:

- Grading differences
- Hybrid/Full time online/ Full time in person.
- Graduation/Prom/Extra Curriculars
- Spending way too much time with family
- Sporting events
- Social engagements
- Navigating new types of learning online



GENERAL AND SOCIAL ANXIETIES:

Common signs and symptoms include:

- Excessive worry
- Increased fear based thoughts
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Muscle tension
- Trouble concentrating
- Increased psychosomatic symptoms
- Sleeping difficulties

Contributing Factors:

- Biological (Neurotransmitters, dopamine and Serotonin)
- Family (Stressed parents, Stressful parents responses, unhealthy anxiety management)
- Environmental (Traumatic experiences, Pandemic)
- Peer & Social influences (What is being said, increased peer worry, ect.)

DEPRESSION AND TRAUMA RESPONSE

Common Signs and Symptoms include:

- Irritability/anger
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty paying attention
- Loss of interest
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Restlessness or agitation
- Withdrawal
- Thoughts of suicide/self harm

Contributing factors:

- Prolonged trauma
- Prevention of healthy social/emotional interactions
- Lack of routine
- Fears and phobias
- Grief and loss
- Feeling a lack of support or understanding
- Social Media

ASSOCIATED PSYCHOSOMATIC SYMPTOMS:

- Heartburn
- Acid reflux
- Lack of appetite
- Overeating
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Constipation/Diarrhea
- Headaches and migraines
- Difficulty sleeping/Sleeping too much
- “Foggy feeling”
- Dizziness
- Lowered Immune system



QUESTIONS OR
COMMENTS?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Initiating change in moving forward

Understanding the most common/likely struggles:

- Technology addiction
 - Decrease in physical activity/wellness
 - Disinterest/Lack of motivation
 - Fear of COVID/Illness
 - Social Anxiety
 - Fear of another lockdown
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WHAT ARE SOME
OTHER STRUGGLES
YOU ARE SEEING, OR
EXPECT TO SEE?

COMMON STRUGGLE: TECHNOLOGY

Pros:

- Accessibility for virtual schooling
- Social Accessibility with facetime/snapchat/ect.
- Gaming platforms allowing peer interaction and competition
- Increased awareness of technology capabilities including more knowledge of word, spreadsheets, powerpoint, virtual presentations, ect.

Cons:

- Difficulty sleeping due to increased screen time
- Technology addiction (not being able to turn off and engage in other non screen activities)
- Blue light exposure creating medical concerns
- Blurry eyes
- Decreased physical activity

NOW WHAT? HOW TO HELP OUR KIDS MOVE ON FROM TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME:

-Engage with kids outside of screen time.

Idea: For every hour spent in front of the screen they have one hour off screen

-Easing kids back into social interactions with 1-2 peers at a time.

Idea: Going to meet a neighbor at a park, spending time in the back yard with one friend, playing sports with a friend (baseball, football, ect, can be socially distanced sports to engage in)

-Engage in screen time as a family or with friends

Idea: Utilize technology to play games as a family so connection with technology can slowly adjust to face to face communication and engagement.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LIMITATIONS

Effects:

- Low motivation
- Decreased overall wellness
- Weight gain
- Decreased muscle strength
- Disruption of sleep patterns
- Decreased time spent outdoors

Effects continued:

- Decreased immunity
- Increased risk for cardiovascular diseases
- Disadvantage for emotional regulation
- Increased stress
- Decreased self confidence
- Decreased focus and concentration

NOW WHAT? HOW TO HELP OUR KIDS BECOME MORE PHYSICALLY

ACTIVE:

Facts:

-Childhood obesity has raised from 19% precovid to 25% post covid (About a quarter of our country's youth is considered overweight)

-Lack of physical activity creates Behavioral health concerns which have raised 24% of kids 5-11 and 35% for adolescents including Increased hospital visits, suicide attempts, and self harm attempts.

-Kids require at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

Ideas:

Bike rides

Play soccer/baseball (other socially distant activities)

Family hike in a park

Scavenger hunt outdoors made by family members or friends

Set up an obstacle course

Get outside more!

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

- Where anxiety was present, phobias and clinical symptoms can develop
- Fears for selves, others, future
- Lack of control over “life”, Uncertainty
- Seeing others do more or less
- What is being said, rumored or thought versus the facts
- Mask Wearing/not wearing



NOW WHAT? STEPS TO RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

1. ASK and listen: Help them share their experiences and feelings.

How are you feeling about COVID?

Are there any things you are worried about?

What do you think would be helpful?

How do you feel about travel/going to friend's houses?

What are you looking forward to the most?

What do you want to stay the same?

NOW WHAT? STEPS TO RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

2. Be mindful of HOW you ask. Provide quiet distraction by

Engaging in an activity or craft

Taking older children or adolescents for a drive

Going for a walk

Start a “Conversation Journal”

*Engaging in face-to-face conversations can be intimidating, or kids can pay more attention to your cues than answer openly

NOW WHAT? STEPS TO RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

3. Try to avoid:

Statements like “We need to talk” or “I need you to sit down”

Sharing your opinion or feelings first, or asking leading questions

Allowing your own emotions to interrupt the conversation

NOW WHAT? STEPS TO RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

4. Normalize, Validate, and Support

“That absolutely makes sense”

“So many of us feel that way”

“Let’s figure out ways to ease into things”

“We will do this together”

5. “Thank you for talking to me about all of this”

RESPONDING: A FEW LIKELY EXAMPLES

“I don’t want things to change/I don’t want to go back to school. I like being at home”

I understand. We transitioned into this, and it will be a transition back out.

How can we meet in the middle?

“I’m still really scared about COVID” or “I’m really worried about another lockdown.”

I understand. Let’s talk about what you know or have heard, and let’s get some facts. What do you think is making you feel this way?

OTHER LIKELY
QUESTIONS,
STATEMENTS OR
SUGGESTED RESPONSES?

EASING ANXIETY AND WORRY: STRATEGIES TO HELP KIDS MINIMIZE THE FEAR RESPONSE AND SELF REGULATE EMOTIONS:

- Teach and practice deep breathing. 3,7,9 breathing
- Understand facts and escalated fear based thoughts
- Make calm down bottles with your kids to help self regulate emotions
(visit our facebook page for a tutorial: <https://fb.watch/4VwyoxQfdI/>)
- Stimulate the vagus nerve (Chew gum, Hum, sing, Gargle water)
- Cross the midline (Brain hemispheres activate using both logic and emotion resetting the brain) Examples: cross marches, windmills, moving hands and legs on opposite sides of the body
- Grounding techniques (Use all senses Touch, Taste, Smell, Hearing, Sight)
- Use Humor

6 FINAL TIPS

1. Remind them of what they CAN control
 2. Establish a new routine
 3. Make movement a priority
 4. Limit negative social media and news exposure
 5. Set boundaries and initiate change at the pace that feels safe
 6. Keep conversation open and validating
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SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH A JOURNEY TO YOU

- Individual, couples and family counseling
 - Clinicians specializing in children, adolescents, adults, trauma, anxiety, depression, LGBTQ+
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
 - Evidence based trauma therapy
- Neurofeedback
 - Evidence based bio and neurofeedback to “rewire” the brain
- Walk and Talk sessions
 - Therapy room equipped with whisper quiet treadmills and screen for walking therapy session
- Group Counseling
 - Trauma
 - Grief and Loss
 - Lifting the Burden (Support Group)
 - “Who moved my cheese?” (Anxiety)
 - Children with Incarcerated Parents
 - Wellness program for parents and children

HOW TO CONTACT US:

By phone: 814-325-0280

By email: Reception@ajourneytoyou.com

-In-person and Telehealth options available

-Most insurances accepted

-Licensed clinicians, Master's level clinicians, Master's level interns

Two Locations:

1107 West College Avenue

State College, PA

221 West High Street, Loft 500

Bellefonte, PA