

Managing a Broad Range of Emotions Brought on By COVID 19

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NMAIMH competencies addressed:

Working with Others

- Building & maintaining relationships
- Supporting others/mentoring
- Empathy & compassion

Reflection

- Contemplation
- Self-awareness
- Professional/personal development

During this difficult time many of us feel frightened, confused, angry, insecure, and in disbelief. Remember, these are all normal emotions given the current crises conditions. What is most important is how we manage these feelings to maintain optimal wellbeing today and overtime. This crisis will come to an end.

Twenty-twenty (2020) will be remembered as one of the most life changing years in the history of the world. In the United States of America, the death toll had exceeded the number of losses experienced in 9/11. An invisible killer, probably no larger than the tiniest pinhead, is raising chaos on all aspects of our lives. Thousands of people have lost their lives, millions their livelihoods, kids across the country are out of school, individuals are in isolation from their family, friends and loved ones, and the list goes on.

The purpose of this article is to layout some ideas for home visitors that support families and their children through this difficult time. Our aim is to support parents to keep their children at the forefront in a way that the children feel safe, secure and protected. Keep in mind that as home visitors, our primary role is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children. We need to be aware that children are experiencing the same, if not more confusing and intense emotions.

So, first and foremost, for you, the home visitor, it is important that you are in a safe place, that you have enough food for you and your children, and that you feel held and supported by others. If you can answer yes to the questions below then you are ready to support other families.

1. Are you following the Governors Guidelines for Social Distancing?
 2. Are you in a safe place?
 3. Do you have enough food in your home for you and your family?
 4. Do you know where to call for help with food?
 5. Do you feel held and supported by the Home Visiting Team?
 6. Are you talking with your children about your and their emotions?
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Recently, during reflective supervision someone (I don't remember who) said, "If you want to help others, you have to help the most important person, that is you. This include your children; you need to take care of yourself before you take care of them."

Now that you have reflected on your own well-being, you are in a position to help families. The questions above, asked sensitively, can be a good way to open up discussions with families. Make sure your families have food. Find out if someone other than the home visitor is checking up on them (Social Support system). Furthermore, assure that families are connected with the resources needed, and provide activities to families so they can keep engage with their children. The link below contains great ideas for parents to do with their kids during this time:

<https://www.newmexicokids.org/coronavirus/home-learning.php>

Additionally, the following ideas would help families to manage emotions, fear, anxiety, etc. (Psycom, 2020):

- Allow yourself to sit with your feelings for 2-3minutes at the time. Remember, it is ok to feel dysregulated
- Write down the things you are grateful for, and when you feel down, go back to the list and add more
- Remind yourself that anxiety, fear, etc., is storehouse of wisdom. Tell yourself "Anxiety", I am not longer afraid of you, what can you teach me today?"
- Exercise. It will help you to be grounded and feel more capable
- Appreciate your courage and be kind with yourself

Finally, self-regulation is an essential ability to process and manage our own emotions and behaviors in a healthy way. Through challenging times like the one we are currently experiencing, it is important to practice self-regulation, and to teach our children ways to self-regulate. Reassure your kid that is ok to be afraid. Help your child to describe his/her feelings. Allow your kid to be apart from you, and let her/him know that you will be right there when he/she needs you. Hug and comfort your child to help him/her feel safe and loved (KidsHealth, 2018).

New Mexico Resources:

- **<https://cv.nmhealth.org/>**
Coronavirus Hotline: **1-855-600-3453**
For non-health related COVID-19 questions: **833-551-0518**
- **www.newmexicokids.org**
- NM Crisis and Access Line (counseling services):**855-662-7474**
<https://www.nmcrisisline.com/>

For more information on COVID-19 visit:

- Information for workers affected by COVID-19 in New Mexico
<https://www.dws.state.nm.us/COVID-19-Info>
- NM Latest updates: **<https://www.newmexico.gov/latest-updates/>**
- CDC-Coronavirus information: **<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>**

Questions to encourage discussion and reflection...

- How the current events would impact your life today and the future?
- How has been for you to be a supervisor/home visitor during this point of time?
- Do you find that you are taking care of yourself different today than in the past?
- Where do you turn for support during this time, on a personal level and as a home visitor?
- Are there areas you could use more support?
- What can you do to reach out for what you need?

References

KidsHealth, (2018). *Normal Childhood Fears (for parents) – Nemours KidsHealth*. Retrieved April 7, 2020. From: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety.html>

Psycom.net, (2020). Mental Health Treatment Resource Since 1986. *Facing Your Fears: Tips to Overcoming Anxiety and Phobias*. Retrieved April 7, 2020. From: <https://www.psycom.net/facing-your-fear>