

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Dahra Williams, Ph.D.

Consulting Psychologist



Inspire. Dream. Achieve.



Points to consider with children

- We are all going to experience a **wide range of emotions** which may **change** over the course of our time at home with our families.
- Kids may be limited in terms of how they express their feelings depending on:
 - Age
 - Verbal abilities
 - Social and Emotional maturity
 - Family patterns, trends, and unspoken rules
- One thing that we can all agree on is that we are all affected
- All of us are grieving the loss of something
 - Even the feeling of “normalcy”
- At this point, we are all a little (or a lot) tired....

And Now This.....

Parents Trying To Figure Out
Whether They Should Send Their
Kids Back To School Or Stick With
Remote Learning



It's a wrecking ball.

General Anxieties about Daily Living



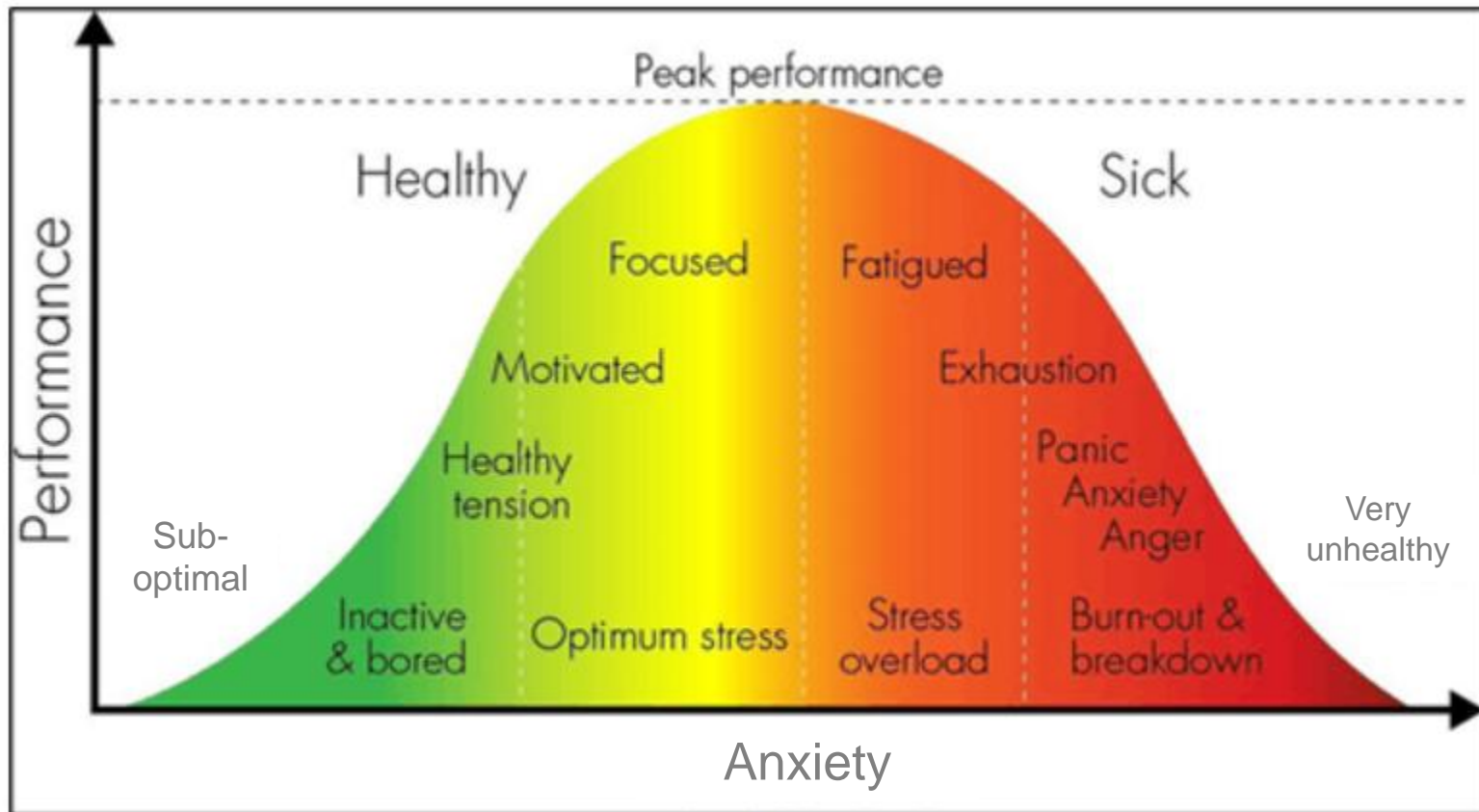
is a normal human reaction.

- Anxiety can be helpful in some cases and in the right dose
- Anxiety gives us information about how we feel about something

General Anxieties about Daily Living

- Anxiety Occurs when
 1. Anxiety is present when there is **uncertainty**
 2. Anxiety is present when feel as though **we don't have control** over a situation
 3. Expectation that something **bad** that's going to happen
 4. We are **unable to cope** with that bad thing
- Any one of these will lead to feelings of worry
- Truth is – we deal with loads of uncertainty in our daily lives

Can Anxiety be a good thing?



Anxiety the Time of COVID-19

- We legit do not have control over a lot of the virus and virus related happenings
- Legit – something really bad could happen
- Added to that are all the small daily stressors around:
 - Unknowns
 - Changes in procedures everywhere
 - Changes in all aspects of our lives
 - Normalcy? What was that?

How are our kids impacted during COVID-19?

- This time is full of Uncertainty
- Uncertainty is hard to tolerate
- Uncertainty grows Anxiety



- Anxiety and Depression often co-occur
- It can present itself as many different things
- You can help with **predictability** in the face of so many unknowns

Kids' Sadness About COVID-19

May Look Like:

Anger

"This stupid remote doesn't work!"

Resisting the "new order"

"I'm not doing four math problems! I'm only doing one!"

Tiredness

"I don't want to go for a walk. I'm too tired!"

Numbing Out

("Just 30 more minutes on the iPad!")

Displaced frustration

"I didn't want lasagna for dinner. I wanted tacos!"

Boredom

"I'm bored" = code for "I'm sad"

Anxiety

- More irritability and grumpiness
 - Tantrums about seemingly small things
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble getting started on tasks
- Reassurance-seeking (Are we going to be okay? Is Grandma going to be okay?)
- Reluctance to separate from parents
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches
- Mixed feelings about returning to school

So much is different

- It was probably unwelcome to do “schoolwork” at home
- Tired of all the zoom playdates and classes
- Mom and Dad at home but unavailable might be tough to handle
 - What do you mean don’t interrupt??

That was a crazy spring!

- Persistent Trauma of COVID-19
 - Having to stand in uncertainty
 - Knowing folks that have passed
 - We know that we are still uncertain about the future
 - All we know is that we have a high level of uncertainty
 - So the way we feel is based on our anxiety..... and it perpetuates our anxiety
 - We don't feel like we have control



Tips to Manage Anxiety

- Remember that Anxiety comes from an **EXPECTATION** that something **BAD** will happen




Tip #1

- Try to adjust that expectation
 - It is not a given that something bad *will* happen, something bad *could* happen
- Try to move from *worry* to *wonder*
 - I wonder what is going to happen vs I worry about what is going to happen
 - Anxiety shuts us down
 - Curiosity opens us up to possibilities, flexible thinking, openness to plan and prepare
 - Reframing is an important skill to learn

Tips to Manage Anxiety

- Remember that Anxiety comes from the feeling that whatever bad thing will happen, we are unable to cope



Tip #2

- Try talk it out with your child
- Listen first
- Validate concerns
- Don't try to go in and solve the problem right away
- Ask if they want help with finding a solution

Address Anxiety about School Directly

- Talk about it – Validate it
- Name, acknowledge, and empathize
 - “That was really hard for me too”
 - “I am not sure, but we are going to try and figure it out together”
- It is powerful to sit with emotions and not just ignore them
- Meet kids where they are developmentally
 - Offer small chunks of info
 - If they need more, they will ask

Tips to Manage Anxiety

- Remember that Anxiety comes from the feeling that whatever bad thing will happen, we are unable to cope

Tip #3

- What does your child worry about? Why might they feel that they are unable to cope with? What worries you most about returning to school?
 - Look for the wins from the Spring
 - Notice what worked and build on them
 - What are you most excited about
 - Consider adopting a growth mindset
 - I can make a mistake and learn from it vs. I can't do it
 - This will help foster resilience and flexibility

Accomplish BIG Things With a

GROWTH MINDSET!

Success Begins With Believing You Can



Instead of Thinking...

- I can't do it.
- I'm not good at this.
- It's good enough.
- It's too hard.
- I'm afraid of making a mistake.
- They are better at it than I am.
- I don't know how.
- I can't make this any better.
- I don't like challenges.
- I give up.




Think This...

- I'm still learning. I'll keep trying!
- What can I learn to get better at this?
- Is this the best I can do?
- With more practice it will get easier!
- Mistakes are how I learn & get better!
- What can I learn from them?
- I can learn how!
- I can always find ways to improve!
- Challenges make me better!
- I'll try a different way!



Tips to Manage Anxiety

- Remember that Anxiety comes from the feeling that you have no control



Tip #4

- Focus on controlling what you can control
- Make a family plan and stick to it
- Practice – Practice – Practice
 - Familiarity will promote comfort
 - Drive by school
 - Mask wearing at home a few mins each day; go out with your mask on
 - Frequent handwashing
 - Social Distancing
 - Be really concrete with little kids

Help With wearing Masks and other concerns

- How to talk with your kids about COVID-19
- <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
 - Welcome questions
 - Validate fears and be reassuring
 - Meet them where they are developmentally
- Ways to encourage your child during this tough time
- <https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/advice/encouraging-things-you-can-say-to-kids/>

Elmo can help!!

- **Sesame Street** – Kid Friendly explanations of what's going on these days.
 - ***Town Hall***- Kids ask questions of the experts
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/25/app-news-section/cnn-sesame-street-coronavirus-town-hall-april-25-2020-app/index.html>
 - ***Elmo Talks about wearing a Mask***
 - <https://www.cnn.com/videos/health/2020/04/25/elmo-sesame-street-people-wearing-masks-gupta-sot-town-hall-vpx.cnn>

Our kids can be superheroes!



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HEROES WEAR MASKS


ELMO'S SUPER ADVENTURE



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Tips to Manage Anxiety

- Remember that Anxiety can come in many forms including physical symptoms (headaches, racing heart, tummy aches)



Tip #5

- You can't be anxious and relaxed at the same time
- You and your child can try to promote a more calm physical state
- Practice Mindfulness, Deep Breathing, and Relaxation strategies

Strategies to reduce Anxiety

- **Belly Breathing** (Diaphragmatic Breathing). This is a great technique to calm our bodies and minds.
 - Check out the Bio Belly App for your mobile devices (biofeedback app for breathing)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PcCmxEW5WA&fbclid=IwAR1igRGey-yKjglqYmJjhikObCr8msUD_d1P5FSdck6OesM2ubEo1C8zNgQ
- For even little kids – belly breathing song
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c646TZ_E18A



Strategies to reduce Anxiety

- **Rainbow Breath (Mindful breathing)**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29e4rRMv4>

Rainbow Breathing



1. Place your finger at the bottom of the rainbow.
2. Breathe in through your nose and trace the red arc until you reach the top.
3. When you reach the top, begin to exhale through your mouth and continue tracing.
4. Repeat with each color or until you feel calm and grounded.


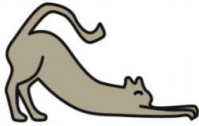



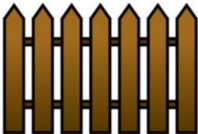













THE CALM CLASSROOM

Strategies to reduce Anxiety

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>

Squeeze a lemon 	Stretch like a cat 	Chew that carrot 
Hide in your shell 	Swing up high 	Squeeze through a fence 
Get that fly off your nose 	Squish your toes in the mud 	Relax 

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION	
	Take 3 Deep Breaths
	Squeeze your foot for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your leg for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your stomach for 5 seconds, Relax
	Shrug your shoulders for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your arm & hand for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your whole body for 5 seconds, Relax
	Take 3 Deep Breaths

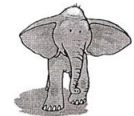
MUSCLE RELAXATION SONG



Shoulders like a turtle
A turtle, A turtle
Shoulders like a turtle
Then you let them loose



Hands squeezing lemons
Lemons, Lemons
Hands squeezing lemons
Then you let them loose



Tummy ready for elephant
Elephant, Elephant
Tummy ready for elephant
Then you let it loose



Toes squishing in the mud
In the mud, In the mud
Toes squishing in the mud
Then you let them loose

Emotion Regulation Skills

- **Esme and Roy** – tips for little kids managing tough emotions
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRMMliFmCVo>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Gy1brc8B-c>



- Emotion Labeling
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akTRWJZMks0>

Help minimize anxiety and celebrate victories

- Allow yourself some time and patience to settle into a sense of the “new normal.”
 - This is still very new for everyone.
 - There is no playbook, so we have to be patient as we find our stride **with each new chapter** during this time.
 - We are constantly being asked to adapt and adjust.
- Look for the small wins!
 - It is unreasonable to expect perfection (at home, at work or at school).
 - Every day can be better than the previous day.
 - At the very least – we get to try again the next day!

One size will not fit all

- Be prepared for the late night talks
- Hear them for what they are saying
- What are they saying to their friends
- Use reflective listening
 - “I heard you say this”
 - “Did I get that right?”
 - “Did you mean....”
- Not problem solving now – just validation
 - “I have some ideas about that – do you want to hear them?”

Focus on Unanticipated Positive Consequences

- What were some of the benefits from being forced to be at home with our families?
- What have you learned through seeing your children up close as learners?
- With no commuting to extracurricular activities, how did you spend those extra evening hours with your family?
- Are there things you will miss when you return to school?
- What did we learn about ourselves during this time?

Final Thoughts

- Kids can be very sensitive barometers of how we are doing as caretakers
- Self-care is not selfish
- Try to ensure that you are engaging in balanced thinking about this situation.
- Kids are resilient but we must still pay attention to what they are telling us, even if it is without words.
- Its all about trust. Do we trust that the school is doing all that they can to keep our children safe? Do we trust our fellow Indy Families?
 - If we are supportive of the school, be supportive in your language and actions

Know Your Number



- Think of how anxious we feel or how we have responded to the pandemic on a scale
 - 1 (not really that anxious, have been out and about, not worrying too much about social distancing, accepting things as is)
 - All the way up to 5 (really uneasy, very observant about social distancing, haven't really engaged in lots of activities)
 - Now you can easily communicate how we feel and even take steps to anticipate and respond to stressful situations.
- If we feel as though Indy is taking all the precautions it can and in your opinion the school is operating at a "3" but for the entire length of the pandemic you have been operating at a level "4" that can give you some idea about what to expect when you return to school and things you can do to help with the transition.
- Conversely, if you think Indy is operating at a "3" but you have been mostly a "1" then you can see what you might have to do to prepare to send your kiddos back.

Additional Resources

- **Webinars**

- NAMI Ask The Expert: In-Person, Virtual And Everything In Between – Supporting Families And Children Returning To School
 - <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-s-Ask-the-Expert/2020/NAMI-Ask-the-Expert-In-Person-Virtual-and-Everything-In-Between-%E2%80%93-Supporting-Families-and-Children>
- **www.Additudemag.com Webinar**
 - <https://www.additudemag.com/webinar/back-to-school-pandemic/>

- **Online Resources**

- NAMI COVID-19 Information and Resources: <https://nami.org/Support-Education/NAMI-HelpLine/COVID-19-Information-and-Resources>
- Back to School Resources for Families and Educators from the Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/backtoschool/>
- NFFCMH COVID-19 Resources for Parents, Families and Youth: <https://www.ffcmh.org/covid-19-resources-for-parents>



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