



#LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

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How are we doing and what would you like to see in the Clinical Newsletter?

We want to connect with you! Please let Angie Huber know what you would like to see in the newsletter. We will do our best to meet your request. Send any requests to aahuber@fcps.edu.

Mental Health: Signs to be Aware of

by: Joanna Wheeler School Psychologist Liberty MS)

Since we all have brains, I think we can all agree, mental health is an important topic for all of us. Therefore, it may be helpful to review the signs of declining mental health. In general, brain-based conditions may impact how we think, feel, and our behaviors. Keep in mind that experiencing multiple signs may indicate more concern, and the signs expressed may vary from person to person.

Some Warning Signs and Symptoms:

- Prolonged sadness or irritability
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Feeling guilty or hopeless
- Bodily Symptoms (stomachaches, headaches, or other pains)
- Inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Declining hygiene
- Poor concentration
- Frequent emotional outbursts
- Substance Use
- Declining grades
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows

In addition to knowing the signs of poor mental health, brushing up on ways to cope may also be helpful. As a family, it may be important to establish a support network that may include friends and other family members. Seeking counseling is also a good option for both the individual experiencing poor mental health and other family members. For other family members, counseling may help provide ways to cope and better understand your loved one's struggles with mental health.

Strategies for Personal Coping:

- Don't ignore how you feel. Try to address your emotions when you can.
- Talk it out with a trusted individual or see a mental health professional.
- Work in mental health breaks throughout the day. Try our **Virtual Zen Den** to guide your mental health break:
- Build your emotional vocabulary so you can better define how you are feeling.
- Try journaling.
- Create a routine that supports your overall mental and physical health.
- Work to stay connected to friends and family.
- Seek the help of a mental health professional.

Self-care is giving the world the best of you, instead of what's left of you.

Katie Reed

Try these questions with the family:

“Would You Rather?”

| |
|--|
| Be able to re-play happy times? (Talk about a happy time.) |
| Or |
| Be able to fast forward sad times? (How do you cope with being sad?) |
| Have a pet that will never pass away? (What pet?) |
| Or |
| Win the Million Dollar Lottery? (What's the first thing you'd do?) |
| Lose your memory (except of people)? (Why would this be hard?) |
| Or |
| Lose your ability to see? (What would you miss seeing?) |
| Be able to speak to animals? (Who would you talk to?) |
| Or |
| Play video games for a living? (What game? Why?) |
| Change one thing about yourself? (Why?) |
| Or |
| Change one thing about the world? (Why?) |

COPING TOOLS: What Helps Me

- Read A Book or Magazine 
 Ride a Bike or Skateboard 
- Hug or Climb a Tree 
 Create Origami 
- Journal or Write a Letter 
 Cook or Bake 
- Use Kind & Compassionate Self-Talk 
 Ask for Help 
- Make a Collage or Scrapbook 
 Talk to Someone You Trust 
- Rest, Nap or Take a Break 
 Weave, Knit or Crochet 
- Go on a Hike, Walk or Run 
 Build Something 
- Take Good Care of the Earth 
 Get a Hug 
- Drink Water 
 Visualize a Peaceful Place 
- Play a Board Game 
 Stretch 
- Do Something Kind 
 Make Art 
- Make and Play with Slime 
 Use Positive Affirmations 
- Discover Treasures in Nature 
 Take Slow, Mindful Breaths 
- Take a Shower or Bath 
 Clean, Declutter or Organize 
- Exercise 
 Use Aromatherapy 
- Drink a Warm Cup of Tea 
 Cry 
- Forgive, Let Go, Move On 
 Try or Learn Something New 
- Practice Yoga 
 Listen to Music 
- Garden or Do Yardwork 
 Use a Stress Ball or Other Fidget 
- Jump on a Trampoline 
 Get Plenty of Sleep 
- Cuddle or Play with Your Pet 
 Kick, Bounce or Throw a Ball 
- Practice Gratitude 
 Take or Look at Photographs 
- Do a Puzzle 
 Eat Healthy 
- Blow Bubbles 
 Play Outside 
- Smile and Laugh 
 Sing and/or Dance 

Socializing Safely

by: Angie Huber, School Social Worker Liberty MS

Know your comfort level with socialization and be clear with your children. The longer the pandemic continues the more struggles come into play with mental health concerns and feelings of isolation, which leads to an increasing need for socialization with others.

You may see changes in your child, such as your child is more irritable, depressed or anxious. Your child may be sleeping or eating differently. These changes could be due to not being able to do things with others that they enjoy. Similarly, you may be having some of the same feelings and it may be due to a lack of involvement with others. How do you know? Make some changes and see if you feel better. ... but how do you socialize and be safe at this point?

Good strategies can be found on this website from CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html>

If you find that the symptoms continue, evaluate if you saw any improvement. In addition, please feel free to email or call to talk to the counselor, social worker or psychologist. We could brainstorm with you to find the best strategies to help your child to feel better.

What about video gaming for socialization? Many students are choosing to connect with friends by playing video games. Many concerns are being noted about the increasing screen time. So, video gaming, in addition to virtual learning, is an increasing problem. How much is too much, and how do you work to keep your child safe while gaming? How does your child respond to the violence being used in some of the games? Does your child interact and share personal information with people they do not know?

Boys, when compared to girls, seem to be more likely to want to play video games to socialize. Many are playing with people that they do not know. Some people feel they can be a different person during video games. You have probably noticed that some people portray a "different personality" on social media as opposed to what they would do face to face. It is the same with video gaming. Some of this involves taking out frustrations in an unhealthy manner. Some people internalize what is occurring in the games, while others develop bad habits in showing little compassion for others and instead an interest in self-rewarding strategies.

What about the use of weapons and the desire to kill to survive strategies? How does this transfer to face to face interactions/relationships? What traumas or habits are evolving? In heavy game playing, traumatic stress and antisocial interaction strategies have developed for some people. Keep in mind, all people are different and would have varying responses. However, it is important to note the possible concerns and symptoms.

All in all, playing games can help teens feel connected to others. The flip side is that playing games can also provoke feelings of anger or frustration in those who play games with others online. Be aware! Some children will change their mood when they are playing games and are markedly different and seemingly less irritable when they stop playing for a few days.

With all of this in mind, pay attention in trying to notice changes in your children and work to find a balance in developing healthy and positive mindsets and interactions.

Resources:

If you or someone you care about is in crisis, please call [911](tel:911) or access one of the mental health resources below:

Reach out to a trusted adult (parent, counselor, teacher, coach, etc.); <https://>

Try [these tips](#) for supporting a friend or family member

Text NEEDHELP to 85511 for the [Crisis Link](#) Hotline at or call them at 703-527-4077

Chat online with a specialist at [CrisisChat.org](#) or [ImAlive.org](#)

Call an emergency mental health center at 703 573-5679 (Merrifield Center), 703-536-2000 (Dominion Hospital), or 703-289-7560 (INOVA emergency services)
CR2 – 844-627-4747

Go to the nearest emergency room at your local hospital

Call 911

Try these activities for your student!

⇒ Liberty Middle School Afterschool Program

<https://libertyms.fcps.edu/activities/after-school-program>

⇒ Fairfax County Park Authority Programs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>

CALM DOWN TOOLS FOR OLDER KIDS

www.andnextcomesL.com

Items that give kids a brain break

- Puzzles
- Chapter books to read
- Blank notebook/journal and writing utensils
- Coloring books
- Scratch art doodle pad
- Activity books
- Brain Quest cards
- Doodle books
- Mad Libs
- One player travel sized games

Items for auditory sensory support

- Noise cancelling headphones
- MP3 player with music, nature sounds, audiobooks, etc.
- Sound machine

Items for oral motor sensory support

- Chewing gum, hard candies, or lollipops
- Snacks with a variety of textures
- Chew necklace

Items to support breathing & relaxation

- Book of yoga poses or yoga activity cards
- Rescue Remedy Spray

Items that provide proprioceptive support

- Punching bag or bop bag
- Mini massager
- Weighted lap cushion
- Hand weights
- Resistance/exercise bands
- Compression clothing
- Heated blanket
- Weighted blanket
- Skipping rope

Items to squeeze, fidget with, or keep hands busy

- LEGO kits
- Stress balls
- Rubik's Cube
- Wooden or metal logic puzzles
- Craft kits
- Cat's cradle

Items to visually calm

- Kaleidoscope
- Eye mask
- Look & find books
- Lava lamp

Items for olfactory sensory support

- Calming essential oil spray
- Scented lotion

For Personal Use Only | And Next Comes L | <http://www.andnextcomesL.com>

HOPE CHATS!!



Your students will have the opportunity to participate in HOPE CHATS. This will be a time when the students can send in questions or concerns that they would like to have addressed by a multicultural and multiprofessional team. Students will be given an opportunity to send in topics or questions each week. We will be available to answer questions during that time or individually at a different time, if they would prefer. If you would like your student to send questions or concerns, please send them to the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc_4bQMb9gOPrVQfbCo9RqVDSml1knspZ11cX7jI93uj7W8XQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Angie Huber, School Social Worker, will reach out to you to set up a time to chat.

More resources that you may find helpful!

FCPS Parent Resource Center- (You can sign up for email notifications or trainings below by hovering over the link and hitting Ctrl and then click)

They are offering many virtual trainings, such as:

[How to Get Your Child/Adolescent to Open Up to You](#)

Friday October 2, 2020, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

[Register for How to Get your Child/Adolescent to Open up to You](#)

[Alcohol, Drugs, and Vaping: What Every Parent Needs to Know](#)

Friday, October 16, 2020, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

[Register for Alcohol, Drugs, and Vaping: What Every Parent Needs to Know](#)

[Moving on To Life in the Community: A Virtual and Free Resource Fair for Students with Disabilities](#)

Wednesday October 21, 2020, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

[Register for Moving on To Life in the Community: A Virtual and Free Resource Fair for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Encouraging Positive Behaviors at Home Series](#)

10/22/20: Challenging Behaviors: Prevention Strategies and Teaching Self-Control

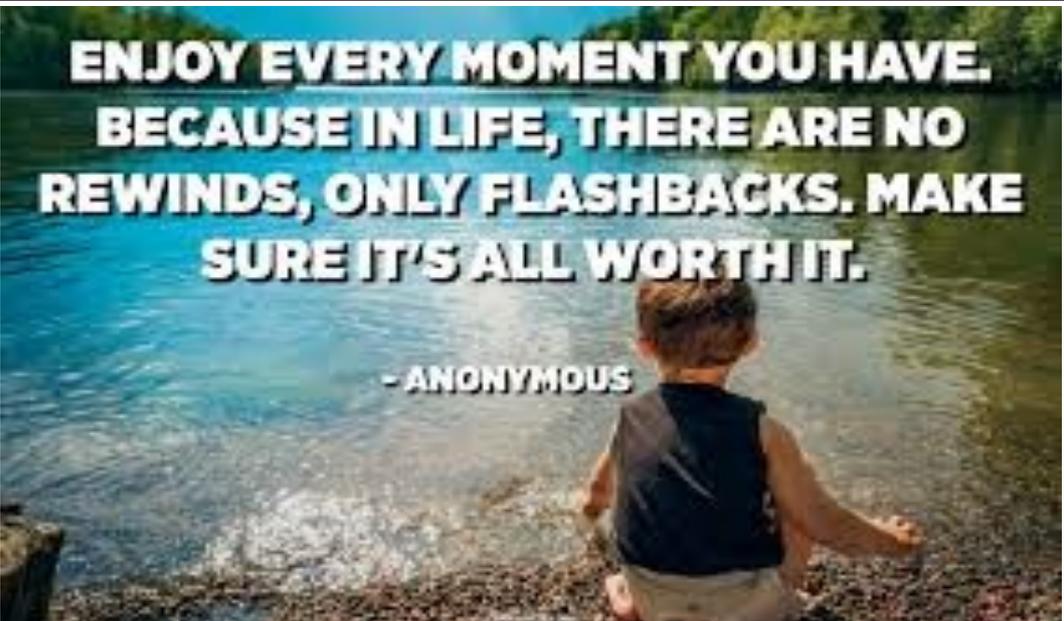
Thursday October 22, 2020, 10 - 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

[Register for Challenging Behaviors: Prevention Strategies and Teaching Self-Control](#)

[Launching Your Adolescent into Adulthood](#)

Friday, October 30, 2020, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

[Register for: Launching Your Adolescent into Adulthood](#)



For more social-emotional resources and lessons please visit the LS Clinical Team's website (see the link below- works best in Google Chrome):

<https://sites.google.com/view/liberty-ms-clinical-team/mental-wellness-topics>

See Resources from School Social Worker on Liberty MS Website:

<https://libertyms.fcps.edu/social-work-resources>

Angie Huber,
School Social Worker
aahuber@fcps.edu



Joanna Wheeler,
School Psychologist
jwheeler@fcps.edu

