

# Parenting in the Time of COVID:

Finding Peace During the Pandemic

OWLS/OAAP CLE on Zoom

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# What is Considered “Good Mental Health?”

*Good mental health is having the appropriate feelings at the appropriate times and being able to weather them.*

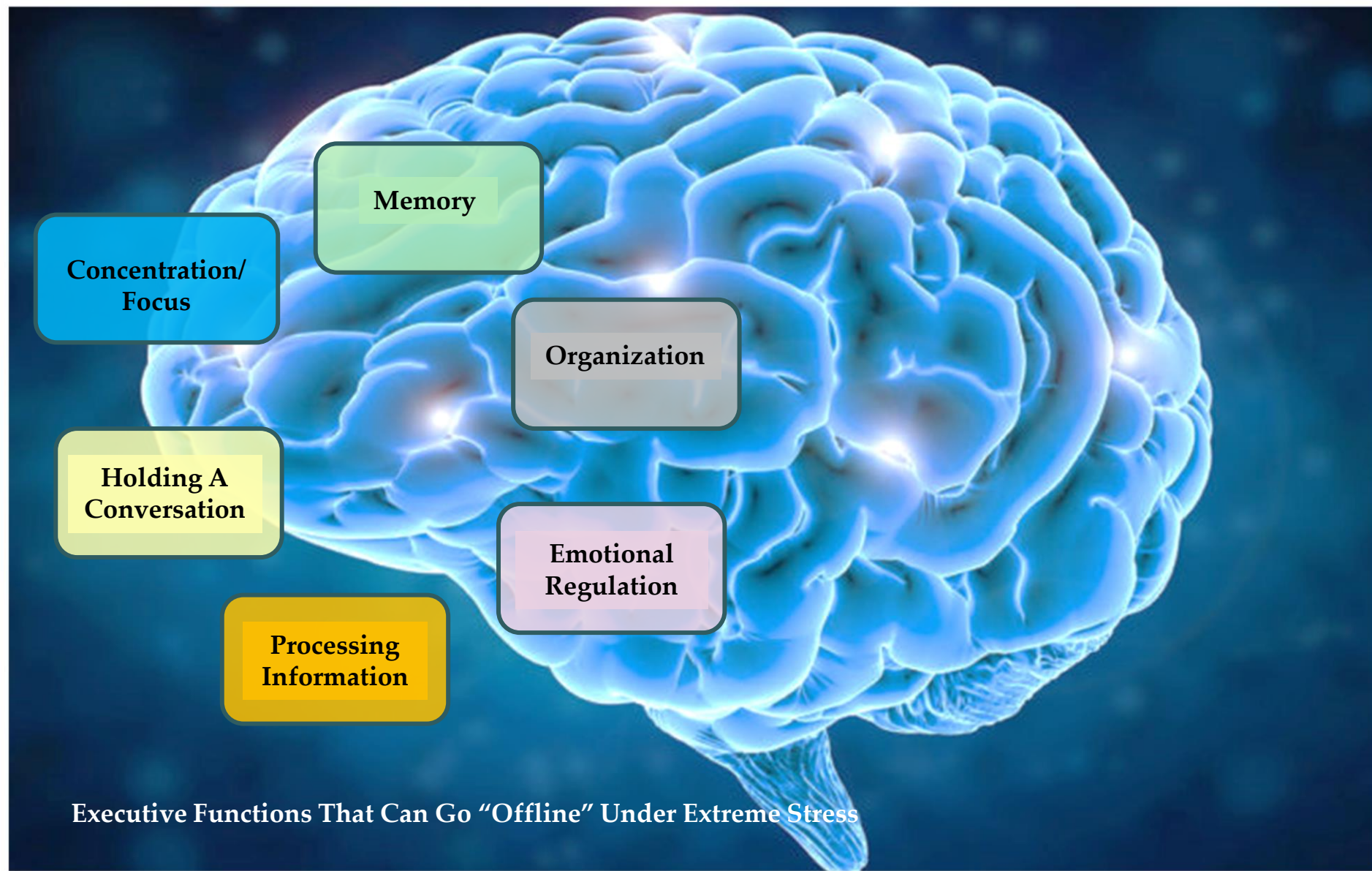
Mental Health

# Trauma Is...

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“[A]n event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

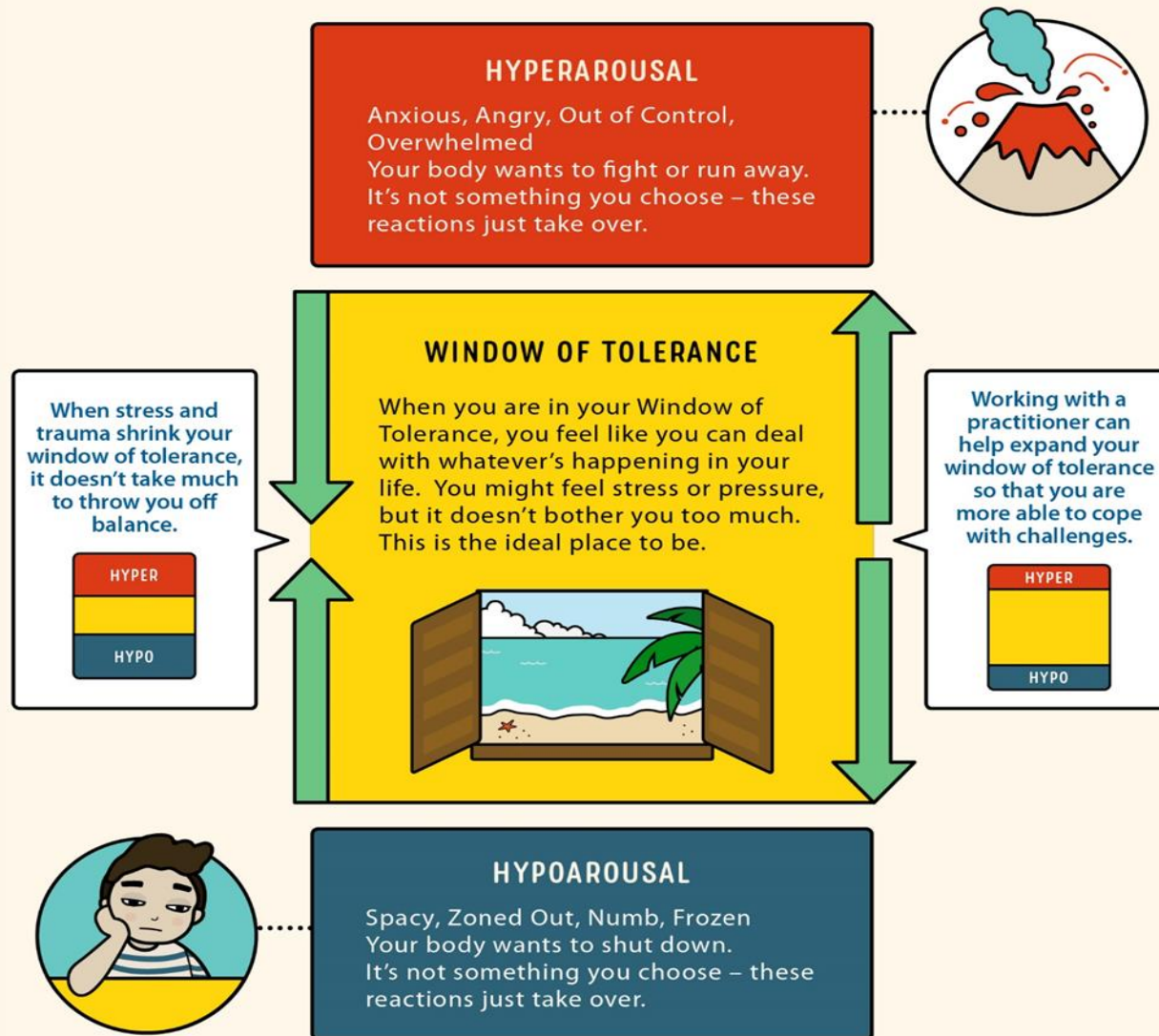
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



Executive Functions That Can Go “Offline” Under Extreme Stress

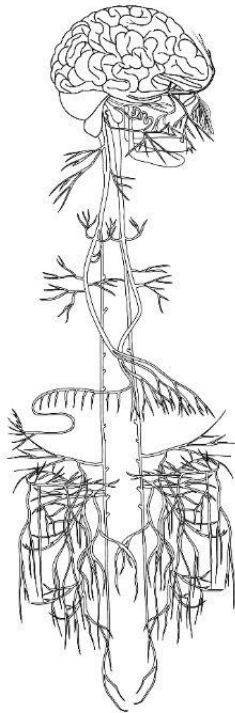


# How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance



# Trauma's Effects on our Nervous System

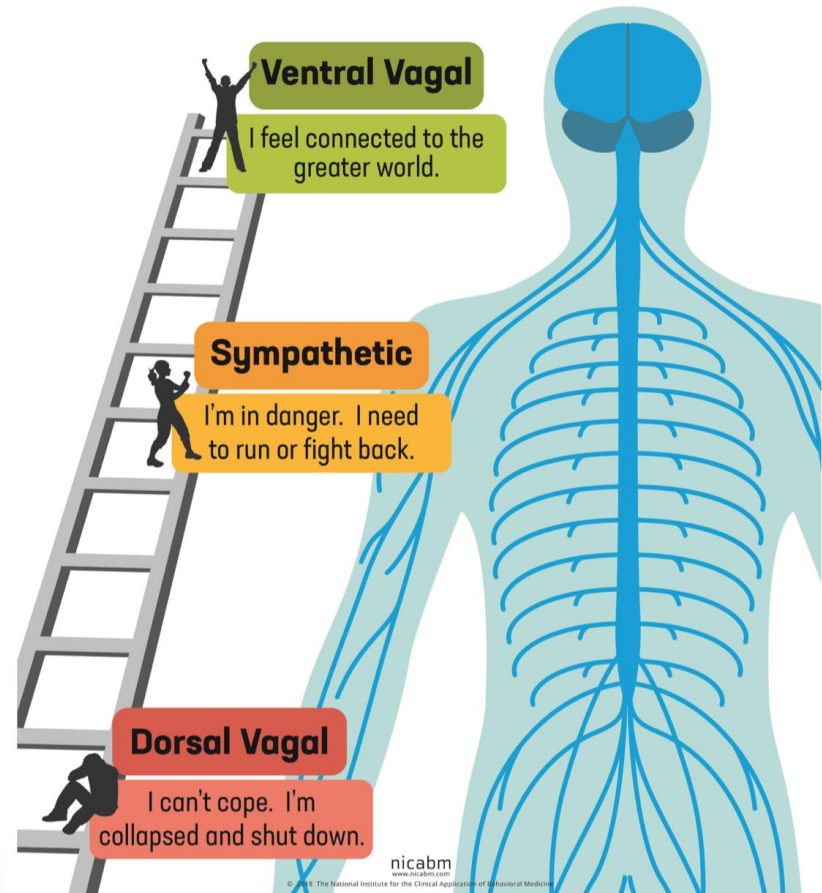
- Three part nervous system:
  - Ventral Vagal
  - Sympathetic
  - Dorsal Vagal



NICABM

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## Polyvagal Theory: The Autonomic Ladder Understanding the Nervous System Adapted from Deb Dana, LCSW







# Trauma Response in Children

Preschool Children	Elementary School Children	Middle and High School Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feel helpless and uncertain</li><li>• Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver</li><li>• Cry and/or scream a lot</li><li>• Eat poorly and lose weight</li><li>• Return to bedwetting</li><li>• Return to using baby talk</li><li>• Develop new fears</li><li>• Have nightmares</li><li>• Recreate the trauma through play</li><li>• Are not developing to the next growth stage</li><li>• Have changes in behavior</li><li>• Ask questions about death</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Become anxious and fearful</li><li>• Worry about their own or others' safety</li><li>• Become clingy with a teacher or a parent</li><li>• Feel guilt or shame</li><li>• Tell others about the traumatic event again and again</li><li>• Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise</li><li>• Have a hard time concentrating</li><li>• Experience numbness</li><li>• Have fears that the event will happen again</li><li>• Have difficulties sleeping</li><li>• Show changes in school performance</li><li>• Become easily startled</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feel depressed and alone</li><li>• Discuss the traumatic events in detail</li><li>• Develop eating disorders and self-harming behaviors such as cutting</li><li>• Start using or abusing alcohol or drugs</li><li>• Become sexually active</li><li>• Feel like they're going crazy</li><li>• Feel different from everyone else</li><li>• Take too many risks</li><li>• Have sleep disturbances</li><li>• Don't want to go places that remind them of the event</li><li>• Say they have no feeling about the event</li><li>• Show changes in behavior</li></ul>

# Living at the office





# Oxygen Masks



# Your Kids are Watching You- -What are you conveying?

- How does your child know that you value yourself and your feelings matter?
- How will they know it's ok to struggle?
- How will they learn to forgive their own mistakes and the mistakes of others?
- How will they learn to soothe themselves and not disintegrate when challenged?
- How will they learn how to accept responsibility for their actions?
- How will they know how to manage anger and distress?



# Become a Repair Expert

## 3 Rs of Recovery



**Making mistakes isn't as important as what we do about them.**

Use these steps **after** you have had a chance to cool off.

- 1) **Recognize** the mistake with a feeling of responsibility instead of blame.
- 2) **Reconcile** by apologizing. Children are so forgiving.
- 3) **Resolve** the problem by working together on a respectful solution.

Quotes from the Positive Discipline books © Jane Nelsen

- Model being gentle with yourself when you make a mistake.
- Dinnertime mistake sharing.
- Remember that repairs make the relationship.

# Self-Compassion

- Using mindfulness and self-kindness to attend to our own suffering and help us realize we are not alone.
- Self-compassion meditation for parents:
  - Recognize what's happening.
  - Use a mantra.
  - Offer yourself some kindness.
  - Know you are not alone.
  - Remind yourself of your intention.



Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others.

- Christopher Germer

# Completing the Stress Cycle



"THE STRESS ITSELF WILL KILL YOU FASTER THAN THE STRESSOR WILL—UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING TO COMPLETE THE **STRESS RESPONSE CYCLE.**

WHILE YOU'RE MANAGING THE DAY'S STRESSORS, YOUR BODY IS MANAGING THE DAY'S STRESS. IT'S ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO YOUR WELL-BEING THAT YOU GIVE YOUR BODY THE RESOURCES IT NEEDS TO COMPLETE THE STRESS RESPONSE CYCLES THAT HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED."

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EMILY AND AMELIA NAGOSKI

AUTHORS, *BURNOUT: THE SECRET TO UNLOCKING THE STRESS CYCLE*

## 7 WAYS TO COMPLETE THE STRESS CYCLE



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

YOUR CREW



BREATHING

LAUGHTER



AFFECTION

CRYING



CREATIVE EXPRESSION



# How to Support When we are all Powerless?



- Just be present
- “We’re in this together.”
- Check in with some regularity.
- Normalize their feelings. Help them label their feelings
- Acknowledge and Validate– THIS IS SO HARD!
- The common enemy is COVID (not you. Ex: you are not the reason they can’t spend as much time with their friends, COVID is.)
- Don’t allow them to completely withdraw.
- No one needs to be thriving. Just survive.
- Reduce expectations (for yourself too).
- Maintain humor when possible.

# Resilience

- Strategies:
  - Look for it all around us and share moments of resilience.



# More Resilience Strategies

- Connection and welcoming emotional expression.
  - [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/a\\_loving\\_space\\_for\\_kids\\_emotions](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/a_loving_space_for_kids_emotions)
- Promote healthy risk-taking and support discomfort.
- Talk about problem-solving.
- Demonstrate coping skills.
  - Deep breathing
  - Meditation
  - Jumping jacks
  - Giggle party
- Embrace mistakes.
- Model resilience.

Adapted from Katie Hurley, LCSW

# I CANNOT CONTROL

(So, I can LET GO of these things.)

IF OTHERS  
FOLLOW THE  
RULES OF SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

THE AMOUNT  
OF TOILET  
PAPER AT THE  
STORE

## I CAN CONTROL

(So, I will focus on these things.)

THE  
ACTIONS  
OF  
OTHERS

MY POSITIVE  
ATTITUDE

TURNING  
OFF THE  
NEWS

FINDING FUN  
THINGS TO DO  
AT HOME

HOW  
LONG  
THIS  
WILL  
LAST

HOW I FOLLOW CDC  
RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITING MY  
SOCIAL MEDIA

MY OWN SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

MY KINDNESS &  
GRACE

PREDICTING  
WHAT WILL  
HAPPEN

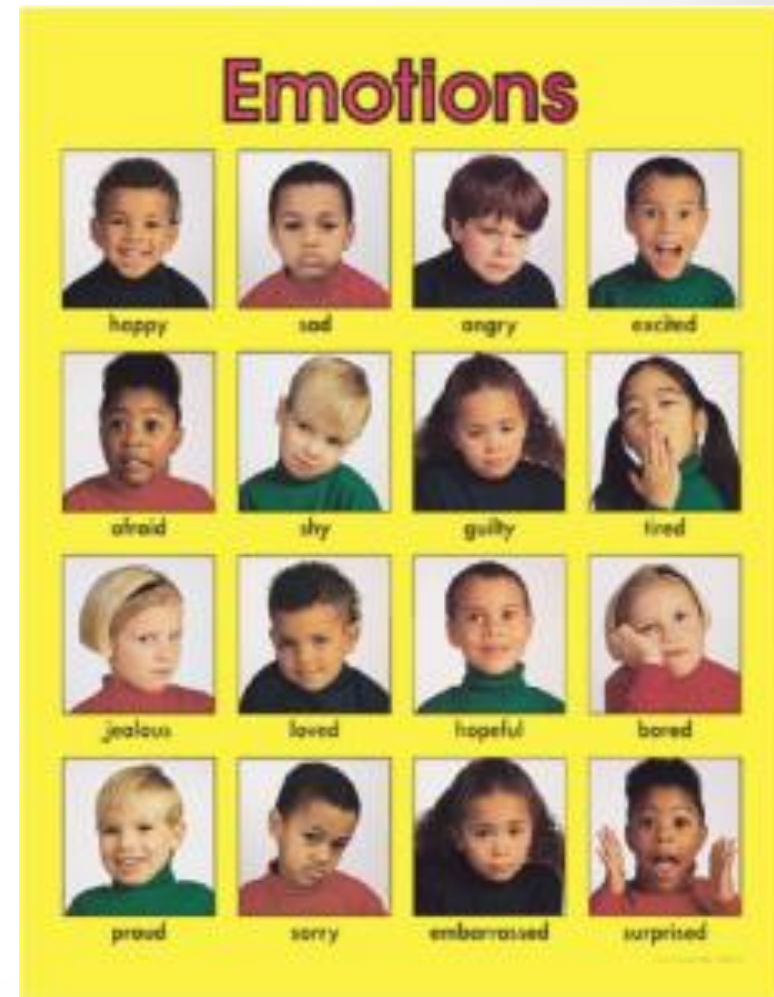
HOW  
OTHERS  
REACT

OTHER  
PEOPLE'S  
MOTIVES





# Talking About Emotions



# THINGS TO TRY

Set up a self-care plan/routine  
Aim for improvement, NOT perfection

Recognize that you cannot solve your child's stress or issues. By managing your own stress in a positive way, you are giving them a massive gift..

Have a family meeting and really start talking openly and honestly about stress management.

Be gentle with yourself and those around you. These are ridiculously stressful times and everyone is doing the best they can, including YOU!



# Resources to Read/Listen

- [www.aaap.org](http://www.aaap.org) – we have a blog!
- [www.pandemic-parent.org](http://www.pandemic-parent.org) – so many great resources here.
- <https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-emily-and-amelia-nagoski-on-burnout-and-how-to-complete-the-stress-cycle/>
- <https://childmind.org/article/how-to-avoid-passing-anxiety-on-to-your-kids/>
- <https://self-compassion.org/>
- <https://www.drdisadamour.com/>
- Apps: My Life and Insight Timer and Breathe Kids
- Oregon Women Lawyers Working Parents Committee
- Journal articles:
  - First Things First: Parent Psychological Flexibility and Self-Compassion During COVID-19: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7200171/>
  - How is COVID-19 pandemic impacting mental health of children and adolescents? <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7481176/>

# Resources for Use with Children

- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-parenting-tips>
- [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/a\\_loving\\_space\\_for\\_kids\\_emotions](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/a_loving_space_for_kids_emotions)
- <https://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/unstuck-ebook.pdf>
- <https://letsembark.ca/time-capsule>
- <https://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/kids-guide-coronavirus-ebook.pdf>



# Questions?





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