

# Role of Parents and Teachers in Helping Kids to Cope with COVID and Develop Healthy Technology Usage



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# Challenging Times



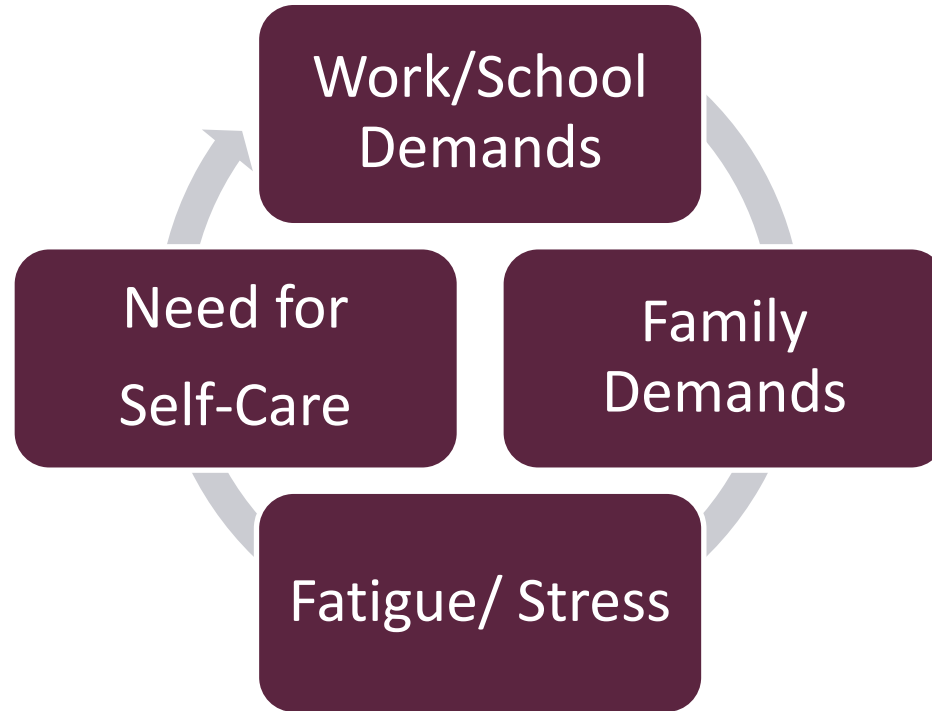
- There is a climate of great political division in America and racial unrest.
- There is a crisis in Ukraine.
- More than 900,000+ Americans have died of COVID.
- Technology is consuming the lives of our youth.
- There is great concern about global warming.
- The mental health needs of youth may have never been greater!

# Stay C.A.L.M. Model



- **C** is for **calmness – control** what you can, which is your reaction to the pandemic and decisions you make.
- **A** is for being **available** for your family, staff, students and parents and being **alert** to signs of stress for yourself and all concerned.
- **L** is for **listening** to input from everyone. Also, for **limiting** television coverage of the horrors of the virus and the war in Europe especially for young children.
- **M** is for **modeling** coping with anxiety and fear related to the pandemic, and **management** of technology.

# Review: The Cycle of Normal Stressors



# Did You Develop and Follow a Self-Care Plan?



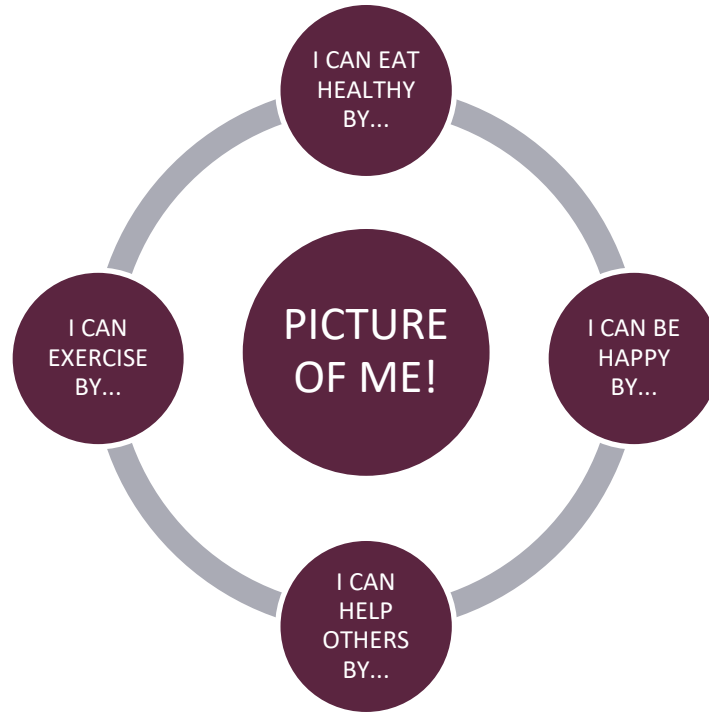
- **Physical self-care** includes diet, exercise and proper rest.
- **Mental self-care** includes attending to your emotional needs by talking to other adults and examining the problem outside of your body. Let go of self-criticism as everyone has made mistakes in the face of the pandemic. Express your thoughts and emotions through journaling, painting, drawing, gardening, and other creative avenues.

# Staff, Parents, & Older Children's Self-Care Plan Components



- **Spiritual self-care**, even if you are not religious, includes living by a set of values you wish for others (compassion, empathy, friendliness, helpfulness, humor, and respectfulness).
- **Embrace nature** by spending time outdoors.
- **Model good values** by being that positive person for your family and others!
- **Engage in “I can” statements:** “I can relax myself by-, make myself happy by-, exercise by-, relieve stress by-, be a good friend by-, help others by-, eat healthy by-, and get proper rest by-” “I can balance technology usage.”

# Younger Children's Self-Care Plans



# Stress Management for Youth



- Play with a pet – assists in calming and feeling a sense of value through the pet's unconditional love.
- Meet and communicate with friends in person – talking about what's going on with you supports well-being.
- Appreciate nature – a relationship with the outdoors makes us feel good.
- Turn off smart phones for a portion of the day – take a break from the constant notifications.
- Do something for someone else – chemicals in our brain are released that help us feel good during the process of giving and helping others.
  - *Perhaps the only way an adolescent can truly find themselves and manage everything in their lives is by volunteering and helping others.*



# U.S. Surgeon General Recent Report: Protecting Youth Mental Health



- Our youth face unique and unprecedented challenges and many have lost a caregiver to the pandemic.
- There is an alarming increase in certain mental health conditions for youth.
- We must recognize that mental health is an essential part of overall health and well-being.
- We must support the mental health of all children in educational, community and childcare settings.
- We must address the economic barriers that contribute to poor mental health for children.
- Recommendations were made for schools, families, youth and the community.

# U.S. Surgeon General Recent Report: Protecting Youth Mental Health



- The pandemic intensified pre-existing mental health issues.
- Significant increases have been found for depression, anxiety and emergency room visits for youth.
- Youth are bombarded in our fast-paced culture with online messages that they are not good enough, smart enough, or rich enough.
- Screen time amplifies the mental health problems for youth.
- Screen time displaces activities vital to the mental health of our youth such as sleep, exercise and in-person interactions.

# U.S. Surgeon General Recent Report: Protecting Youth Mental Health



- The report warns of a youth mental health crisis and recommends that we **seize the moment** in our schools, families and communities and step up for our children.
- We need to build strong relationships between children and adults in their families, communities and schools.
- We must ensure that every child has access to high-quality and culturally competent mental health care.
- Technology is wrecking havoc with our youth and **we must attend to how young people spend time online.**

# U.S. Surgeon General Report: How Does Technology Shape Youth Mental Health?



- Messages from media are about their looks, popularity, intelligence, wealth and happiness
- Irresponsible use of technology undermines safe and supportive environments through increasing bullying and exclusion
- Technology must be balanced with other important activities in the lives of our youth

# What is Mental Health?



A state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively and fruitfully and contribute to their community.

World Health Organization

# How to Start a Conversation About Mental Health and Engage Kids at All Levels



- Find shared time when students will talk to you and reach out; do not preach
- Avoid using the phrase, “I understand what you are going through”
- Encourage them to think about how they can best manage the problem and/or control their reactions to it
- Listen and show empathy
- Know their hopes and dreams
- Model self-care and talk about the importance of self-care

# U.S. Surgeon General Report: Protecting Youth Mental Health



- What young people can do:
  - Remember that mental health challenges are real, common, and treatable.
  - Ask for help.
  - Invest in healthy relationships.
  - Find ways to serve.
  - Learn techniques to manage stress and take care of your body and mind; practice **SELF-CARE**.
  - Be intentional about balancing screen time with other important activities.
  - Be a source of support for others.

# Question and Example



- Does anyone remember growing up in a home that only had one phone and it had a cord on it?
- Mom in Georgia's response to my suggestion that her 8<sup>th</sup> grade child should give all her technology to mom before going to bed.
- *Digital citizenship must begin early and be a partnership between our youth, their caregivers and schools.*



# Favorite Free App



## ReThink ([www.rethinkworks.com](http://www.rethinkworks.com))

- Developed by a 16-year-old cyberbullying victim
- It warns against offensive, harmful content before the author can submit it. When children are warned before clicking the send button, they choose not to send the message 93% of the time.

# Key Quote on Technology Dangers



“It’s not about their privacy – this is their lives!”

*Haileyesus Zeriyihun, a dad whose 12-year-old son died after engaging in a Tik Tok challenge.*

# Key Question



How can teachers help caregivers understand the appropriateness of technology/social media and the appropriate amount of screentime at a specific age/grade level?

Every school holds caregiver/teacher conferences and teachers are encouraged to ask about technology usage. Ask if the caregiver is open to hearing some of the teacher's recommendations based on years of teaching at a specific grade level.

# Technology and its Effect on Well-being



- Technology is consuming our children's lives. But what can we do?
  - Families need to discuss technology usage and consider a family blackout evening or day.
  - Schools need to discuss technology in the curriculum and consider a technology blackout day
- How much time do children spend on their screens?

# Screen Time and Children



- 8 to 12-year-olds spend 4-6 hours a day watching or using screens.
- Teens spend up to 9 hours a day watching or using screens. Children may be exposed to:
  - Violence and risk-taking behaviors
  - Videos of stunts or challenges that may inspire unsafe behavior
  - Sexual content
  - Negative stereotypes
  - Substance use
  - Cyberbullies and predators
  - Misleading or inaccurate information

# Too Much Screen Time



Can lead to:

- Sleep problems
- Lower grades in school
- Less time with family and friends
- Not enough outdoor or physical activity
- Weight problems
- Mood problems including depression
- Poor self-image and body image issues
- Lack of in-person communication skills
- Less time to relax and have fun

# Recommendations for Schools



- Include information about appropriate technology usage for students in communications to caregivers through meetings and newsletters.
- Utilize school OIT staff to help everyone keep up with technology trends and developmentally inappropriate apps, social networks and Tik Tok challenges.
- Encourage caregivers to take charge of their child's technology and to think of it as a privilege **not a right!**
- Technology time should be seen as a reward to doing a good job with the work of being a kid.

# Thoughts and Questions for Caregivers to Start a Conversation About Technology



- Avoid conflicts over screen time and model managing technology usage
- Have the bedroom be a “No Technology” zone
- Monitor police and school advisories about trends and challenges
- Check your child’s devices for potential harmful behaviors and know their passwords
- Talk to your child about potential harmful behaviors
- Have your child assist you in developing a safety pledge that he/she will sign and you can endorse
- Show interest in their online behavior
- If they do not want to give you information about social platforms, then sign up for the platform yourself and find out



# Thoughts and Questions for Caregivers to Start a Conversation About Technology (continued)



- Ask about their favorite apps and ask to be shown how they work
- Ask about the platforms they visit and who they follow
- Ask about technology habits and do they ever get in the way of other activities like sleep and time with family and friends
- Ask if they have thought they spend too much time online and have thought of taking a break from technology
- Ask how they feel when they are on certain platforms
- Ask if they have observed cyberbullying and have they been involved in cyberbullying

# Youth Suicide



- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for middle and high school age students according to the most recent statistics from 2020 and increasing numbers of elementary age students are threatening suicide.
- It is important to **review the school suicide prevention plan** and ensure that **all staff and caregivers** know the warning signs of suicide.
- Many schools have programs to monitor student activity on school networks to identify warning signs of suicide or violence. One such program is **Lightspeed** ([www.lightspeedsystems.com](http://www.lightspeedsystems.com)).
- Unfortunately, there are websites that promote suicide and provide specific details about how to die by suicide.

# Signs of Excessive Technology Usage Stress for Youth



- Secretive or defensive about their technology and always turning screens away from caregivers or erasing the history trail
- Technology devices are taken to bed with them
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels
- Sleeping problems
- Decreased in-person time with friends and/or family
- Increased irritability

# How Much Screen Time is Appropriate for Young Children?



## **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):**

- Children under 18 months should avoid the use of screens with exception of video-chatting.
- Children 18-24 months should have high-quality programming only and watch it with parents to help them understand.
- Choose advertising-free content – experiments confirm that children will gravitate towards the products advertised whether healthy or not.

# Positive Technology Impact



## Positive Use

- Developmentally appropriate use of technology can help children grow and learn.
- Teachers can use technology to make complicated content more understandable, i.e. solving math problems, spelling/vocabulary, working on sentence structure.
- Preparing for future tech careers.
- Improved multitasking – learn how to listen and type to take notes, etc.
- Improved problem solving and decision making – technology often presents children with problems that they must solve through apps that provide games and provide immediate feedback on success in solving the problem.

# Negative Technology Impact



## Negative Use

- Lower attention span – immediacy of technological interactions make waiting harder for children as they don't have to search for answers.
- Increased risk and lack of privacy – hackers and criminals can utilize technology to steal identities and harass children.
- Risk of depression – teenagers and children who report more time using media are more likely to also report mental health issues.
- Obesity – not as much time spent running and playing outside.
- Failing grades – less time spent on homework resulting in low grades.
- Cyberbullying – children and teens use social media to bully other kids.
- Social interaction issues – overuse of technology to communicate with others reduces a child's ability to develop social skills that must be used when interacting face-to-face.

# Stages of Adolescent Use of Technology



- Early Adolescence
  - Video conferencing with family and friends
  - Multiplayer video games and social media can help develop social skills
  - Can help kids with autism develop social skills
  - Instagram for Kids (under 13 not recommended)
  - Restrict use to ONLY apps that do not allow strangers to interact with child

# Stages of Adolescent Use of Technology

## (continued)



- Mid-adolescence
  - Researching natural interests
  - Apps that allow creative interests, such as making music, drawing, designing comic books
  - Restrict use to ONLY apps that do not allow strangers to interact with child
- Late Adolescence
  - Mastering coding fundamentals, designing their own games
  - Interacting with others during game apps while keeping personal information private
  - Understanding the footprint that technology leaves for possible criminal exploitation as well as digital history that colleges and future employers will have access to



# What To Do When Your Kid is the Cyberbully



- Online bullying or cyberbullying is the use of technology to deliberately and repeatedly behave in a manner intended to harass, threaten, humiliate or harm others
- 10-20% of students will be a cyberbully according to [www.webroot.com](http://www.webroot.com)
  - Acknowledge that your child has engaged in cyberbullying.
  - Tend to your feelings separately. Focus on your child's actions, motivation, and needs.
  - Identify the specific outcomes you want to achieve. You want the bullying to stop, your child to understand the harm they have caused, to change their behavior, and for the victim to feel better.

# What To Do When Your Kid is the Cyberbully (continued)



- Carefully consider how to best handle the situation. Consider age of the child, length of time cyberbullying has been a problem, severity of cyberbullying, instigator or follower, and age of the victim(s).
- Who needs to be involved in the process of change?
- Sit your child or teen down for a conversation that is calm and focused.
- Identify motivation. Understand why your child or teen chose to act in this manner, e.g. they are under stress, thought it was funny, joined the group, short of empathy?
- Identify consequences, e.g. parent-issued, school issued, police issued, etc.

# Steps to Good Digital Parenting



- *Family Online Safety Institute* ([www.fosi.org](http://www.fosi.org))
  - Talk with your kids.
  - Develop a safety agreement for online behavior.
  - Educate yourself.
  - Use parental controls.
  - Set ground rules and enforce consequences.
  - Friend and follow but don't stalk.
  - Explore, share, and celebrate.
  - Be a good digital role model.

# Best Parental Control Apps of 2022

From [www.verywellfamily.com](http://www.verywellfamily.com)



- Net Nanny ([www.netnanny.com](http://www.netnanny.com))
- Canopy ([www.canopy.us](http://www.canopy.us))
- Qustodio ([www.qustodio.com](http://www.qustodio.com))
- Bark ([www.bark.us](http://www.bark.us))
- FamilyTime ([www.familytime.io](http://www.familytime.io))
- OurPact ([www.ourpact.com](http://www.ourpact.com))



# QUESTIONS?

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# Resources for Caregivers and Educators

Common Sense Media ([www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org))

Family Online Safety Institute ([www.fosi.org](http://www.fosi.org))

Light Speed Systems ([www.lightspeedsystems.org](http://www.lightspeedsystems.org))

ReThink Works ([www.rethinkworks.com](http://www.rethinkworks.com))

Very Well Family ([www.verywellfamily.com](http://www.verywellfamily.com))





**Thank you for  
your participation!**

