

Dealing with anxiety in uncertain times. What complex and fluid times these are! Even for those of us who are the most resilient, the changes in our school district, the state of the economy, and the resulting impact on our personal lives can be overwhelming.

Common Reactions. There are a number of common reactions to the kind of stress many of us are currently experiencing. They may include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty focusing or concentrating;
- Recurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks to other traumatic events;
- Sleeplessness or fatigue;
- Trouble sleeping;
- Change in appetite; upset stomach;
- Crying;
- Irritability;
- Anger, shock, disbelief;
- Grief;
- Feelings of guilt;
- Quick temper;
- Headache, tightness in chest, shallow or heavy breathing;
- Alcohol or other drug use;
- Trying to control every little thing as a strategy to defend against a sense of loss of control and anxiety;
- Bottling up feelings and hiding the impact so as to not contribute to other's anxiety;
- Separating, hibernating, and generally withdrawing, even as we practice social distancing; and
- Obsessing and finding it difficult to think about much of anything else.

All of these can be normal reactions to difficult times and situations. However, controlling too much for too long, bottling up or hibernating – or obsessive focus - as primary ways of managing anxiety can indicate a need for support. When our normal resiliency breaks down, it becomes difficult to sleep, enjoy life, focus, concentrate, and to maintain optimism and energy for our role in providing a good educational environment for children.

Ways to cope and increase resiliency:

- Take several slow, deep breaths to alleviate the temporary feelings of anxiety.
- Talk about stressors and your feelings with supportive friends and loved ones.
- Create a daily routine that includes both home and work.
- Maintain a healthy and consistent bedtime routine.
- Avoid news, social media, and other anxiety provoking activities close to bedtime.
- Do something for someone else – write a card, send a thank you, give back, or any other act of kindness.
- Connect with others – virtually (talking or video), social media, letter.
- Eat balanced meals, even if you're not hungry, so your body has the energy to deal with stress.
- Take time to let your body relax and recover.
- Acknowledge your emotions and explore healthy ways to express them.
- Exercise or move your body at least 20 minutes a day, stretching at your desk counts.
- Avoid the use of alcohol and other drugs and limit caffeine intake.
- Practice mindfulness techniques.
- Make time for your own form of spirituality and/or religion.
- Engage in an old hobby or explore a new one.
- Notice negative or anxious automatic thoughts popping into your head and challenge their evidence. We do have the power to control and shift our thoughts.
- Look for the positive.
- Control what can be controlled and let go of what can't be controlled.