



Tips for Early Childhood Educators During COVID-19

## WHEN CHILDREN WORRY

Coming back to pre-school and childcare is an opportunity for teachers to do what they do best—help children feel safe, calm, and secure through predictable and responsive relationships.

While some children may be eager to return, children who have been home full time with their parents may experience separation anxiety upon reopening. They may also be experiencing the trauma of illness in their family, financial hardship, or abuse that may have worsened during the quarantine. In addition to COVID-19, the growing awareness of racial injustice around us may affect young children. They may feel particularly vulnerable and may not be able to express their worries.

### WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN DURING THESE TIMES



#### PRACTICE BREATHING

Encourage children to put their hands on their bellies and slowly take three deep breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth.



#### TALK IT OUT

If caregivers and children are wearing a mask, it is hard to see facial expressions. It is more important than ever to talk through feelings. When children verbalize their worry, answer them as simply and honestly as you can.



#### DRAW IT OUT

Encourage children to draw what they are feeling and to name it. Ask about their feelings: “What color is your feeling?” “What does your feeling look like?” Create a story by labeling their pictures.

# WHEN CHILDREN WORRY (CONTINUED)

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## STRETCH IT OUT

Simple stretches or yoga poses teach children how to reduce stress in a healthy way. Practicing poses and breathing can improve a child's emotional regulation and can give a child a strong sense of accomplishment and empowerment.



## REASSURE CHILDREN

If children see news that may be frightening or express worries about the virus, reassure them that adults are working to keep them stay safe. Use play and honest conversation to help young children feel secure, safe, and loved.



## IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP

If you think that a child needs mental health support, the following are resources for you and for parents:

### **REGIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION SERVICES**

[www.mass.gov/early-childhood-mental-health](http://www.mass.gov/early-childhood-mental-health)

### **CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INITIATIVE**

[www.mass.gov/service-details/find-a-cbhi-provider](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/find-a-cbhi-provider)

## RESOURCES ON HOW TO CREATE CALM IN YOUR CLASSROOM

### **TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL STRATEGIES DURING COVID19**

[www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org)

### **BENEFITS OF YOGA FOR YOUNG KIDS**

[www.azearlychildhood.org/resources/articles/7-benefits-of-yoga-for-young-kids/](http://www.azearlychildhood.org/resources/articles/7-benefits-of-yoga-for-young-kids/)

### **SESAME STREET COMMUNITIES**

[www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/resilience/](http://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/resilience/)

### **MA ASSOCIATION FOR INFANT MENTAL HEALTH**

[www.massaimh.org/member-resources/covid-19-resources/](http://www.massaimh.org/member-resources/covid-19-resources/)



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## REFERENCES

1. The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI), <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/index.html>
2. <https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/econ-coping-schoolstaff-factsheet.pdf>