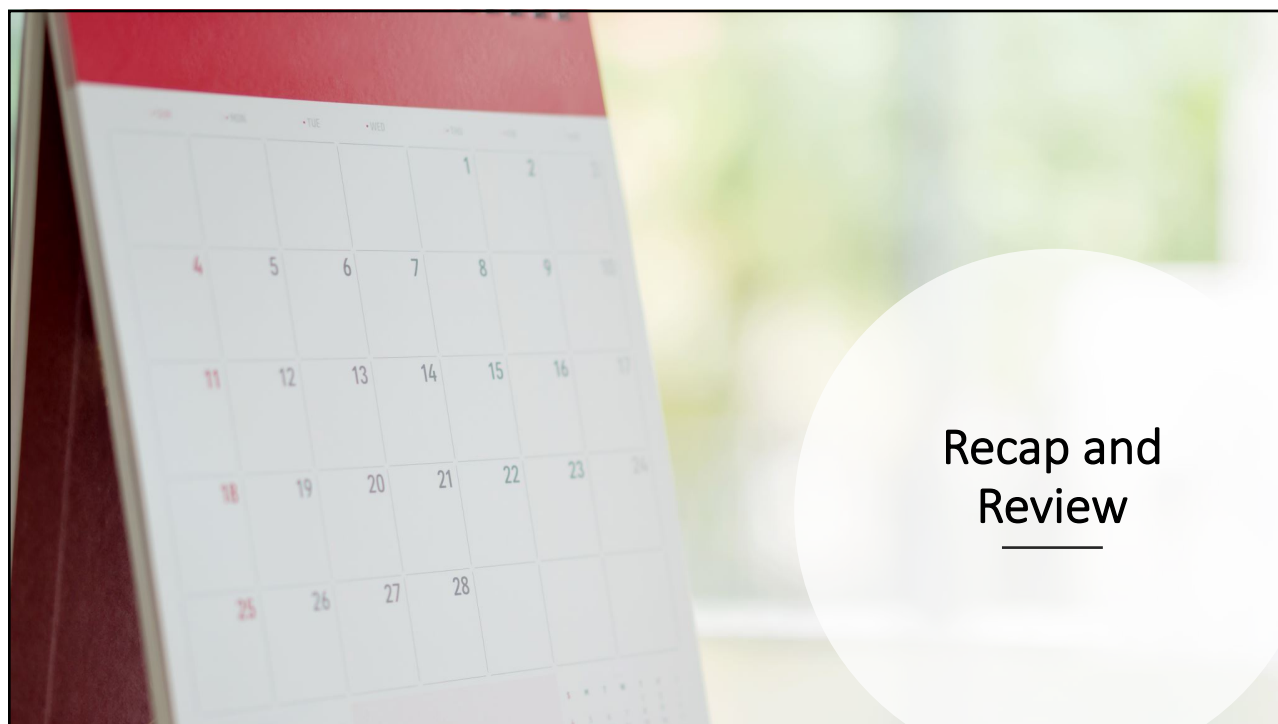


Emotional Health Challenges of students during COVID-19, and beyond...

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COVID-19 effects on the emotional and mental health

- The prevalence of symptoms of anxiety disorder is approximately three times that which was reported in the same time period in 2019
- The prevalence of depressive disorder is approximately four times that which was reported in the same time period in 2019
- Significant increase in the percentage of individuals who reported having seriously considered suicide in the preceding 30 days – almost twice the percentage as was reported in 2018
- Transformation of normal grief and distress into prolonged grief, major depressive disorder, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder.



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Age related COVID 19 and lockdown effects

- Children and adolescents have had a greater impact on their emotional and social development from the lockdown compared to that in the grown-ups. Studies reveal that children feel uncertain, fearful and isolated during these current times
- They experience disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, agitation, inattention and significant separation related anxiety
- Studies found that younger children (3-6years old) were more likely to exhibit symptoms of clinginess and more fear of family members being infected than older children
- Older children (6-18 years old) were more likely to exhibit inattention and were persistently asking questions about COVID-19.


When schools closed abruptly it caused -

- Increased symptoms of depression and anxiety in children and adolescents
- Significant and ongoing difficulties engaging in remote learning
- Lack of parental assistance and support due to -
 - Technology barriers
 - Demands of trying to make a living during the pandemic
 - Significant household stress




School Closures

- For students with disabilities, and this includes mental health disabilities, school closures meant an abrupt cessation of their in-person specialized instruction and related services, such as school-based counseling
- The public health crisis and resulting school closures were incredibly stressful and potentially traumatic for all students, but particularly so for students who are already struggling with existing mental health needs



And for the little ones...

- The child's sense of the world as safe and predictable, and family/caretakers as protection may be disrupted.
- Caregivers/families may be overwhelmed and unable to address their children's fears and sadness.



As students return -

- Children with known mental health disorders are struggling with online learning, hybrid formats, and will struggle with a return to the classroom setting
- Children with depression and anxiety will have considerable difficulty adjusting back to school routines and attending classes in person after prolonged learning from home
- Children with special education needs, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, may experience significant difficulty and behavioral disturbances as they adjust back to the routines in the school setting, as well as resumption of services such as speech therapy, OT/PT, which likely were suspended for an extended period of time

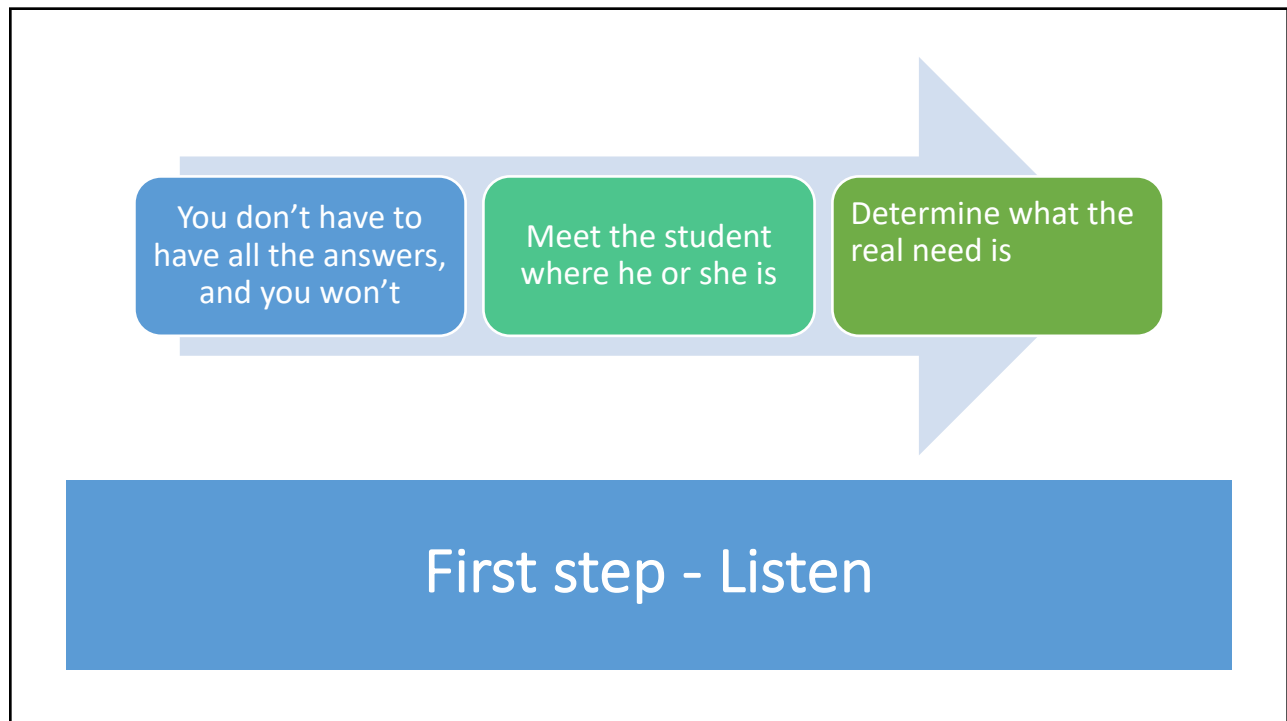


So how do we help?

To start -


- **Be a role model**
 - Students and staff have always looked to you as the medical authority as well as for care and guidance – this will be more important than ever
- **Determine what are the needs for intervention?**
 - Is there a specific class, grade, group of individuals that are struggling
 - Are there parental needs? Staff needs?
 - What are the needs?
- **What kind of communication is available and how can we best connect?**
 - In person
 - Telehealth
 - Virtual Health Office





What is the student really asking for?

- Is it information?
- Is it reassurance?
- Is it comfort?



When thinking about an approach -

- Consider the developmental and chronological age of the students
- Consider the circumstances and surroundings – is this an elementary setting? High School?
- Consider what kind of communication is available -
 - In person
 - Telehealth
 - Virtual Health Office



Age Approaches – Early elementary grades

- Young children need brief, simple information
- Discuss steps we are all taking to keep people safe –
handwashing, social distancing, and mask wearing
- Assure the child that you and other adults are here in the school to help keep them safe

Upper Elementary and Middle School Grades

These students may be more open about their questions regarding their own safety and about the spread of COVID-19 to their school or their neighborhood

They may need some guidance on separating the truth from rumors and fears.

Talk to them about what is being done on a local, state, and national level to keep people safe and control the virus.



Upper Middle School and High School Grades

- These students will have more in depth questions and concerns
- Be honest – provide accurate, factual information about the current status of COVID-19 and steps being taken to control it and keep people safe
- Refer them to appropriate and accurate websites for COVID-19 facts and information, such as the CDC website



When approached by a student or students with questions -



- Be Honest – “It’s OK to say I don’t know but I’ll find out for you”
- Provide health education that is factual and developmentally appropriate
- Information can be very powerful in lessening anxiety
- Correct any misinformation gently
- Determine if there are new issues or needs that need to be addressed

And try to gather information

Changes in family situations

Living arrangements, employment, loss of a family member

Changes in health status

Any new medications, illness, treatment while out of school

Referrals needed?

Counseling, community services, educational accommodations

More
Information



What are some strategies we can use to help our students?



Virtual Health Office

Establish telehealth office hours

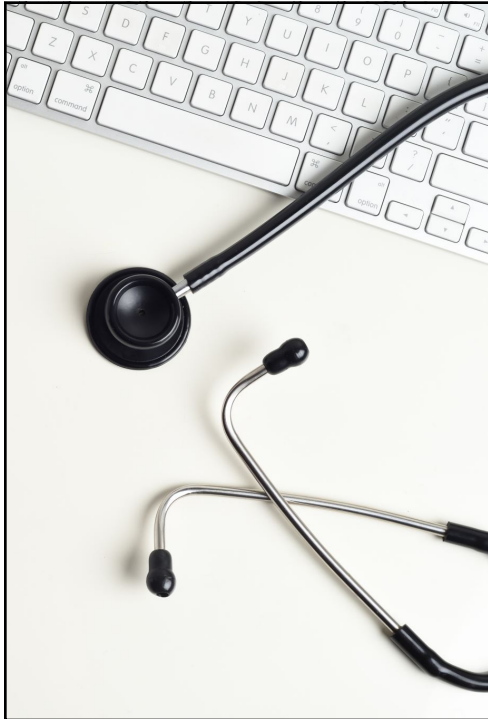
Use apps such as Google meet or Zoom

Set up “talk with the school nurse” sessions – these can be open time slots or set up as individual appointments

Connect with families for updated medical information and to help with referrals for services such as community/social services or mental health services

Monitor students with chronic health conditions





Examples of virtual health offices sites

- <https://www.lawndale.k12.ca.us/health>
- <https://sites.google.com/middletownk12.org/virtual-health-office>
- <https://www.nbpschools.net/VirtualNursesOffice>

Keeping in touch with students and families

Direct emails, phone calls – can be done weekly to ask how things are going for the student and family and see if they need anything

School website – can be used to share information such as updated COVID-19 information -

Establish up a separate area of the website for school nurses to post health information

Post videos

Telehealth visit information and scheduling

Strategies to share with our students

- Breathing exercises
 - Tapping –
NEUSHA online program Emotional Freedom Technique
 - Journaling
 - Literature
 - Art
 - Music
-



Tech strategies

- Apps –
 - Worry Watch
 - nOCD
 - MindShift
 - What's Up – free CBT and ACT (acceptance, commitment, therapy) methods
 - Headspace for kids
 - DreamyKid Meditation
 - Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame
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Some Informational Websites



Mass.gov
resources and web pages

- ed.gov
U.S. Department of Education
COVID-19 website

NASN.org – National
Association of School Nurses

Massgeneral.org – MGH
Psychiatry COVID-19 resources

NASPonline.org – National
Association of School
Psychologists

CDC.gov

ChildMind.org

Wellness



Remember - you, too,
may need some help and
support

It's important to recognize when you need support and to
take time for self-care