



## WHAT IS NORMAL BEHAVIOR FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS RIGHT NOW?

*With schools suddenly closed, many students feel cut off from social networks and are experiencing confusion, stress, worry, and disappointment.*

The following reactions are common, but if they continue for 2 weeks or more, or are very significant changes from their normal behavior, it may indicate that your child or teen could use your help to manage what they are feeling.

| Grades Pre K - 2   | Grades 3 - 6  | Grades 7 - 12   |
|--|---|---|
| Excessive energy / Hyperactivity<br>Frequent crying / Tearfulness<br>Separation anxiety<br>Increased whining<br>Developmental regression<br>(for example, toileting accidents) | Excessive energy / Hyperactivity<br>Excessive worry / Repeated questions<br>Frequent crying / Tearfulness<br>Separation anxiety<br>Increased whining<br>Boredom | Excessive worry / Repeated questions<br>Poor concentration<br>Irritability / Anger<br>Difficulty sleeping<br>Fatigue<br>Boredom |

### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD OR TEEN COPE?

#### TRY TO MAKE YOUR CHILD'S DAY PREDICTABLE:

Determine sleep schedules and help your child stick to them. Children and teens need about 9-11 hours of sleep per night. For more information on healthy sleep, visit [www.sleepeducation.org](http://www.sleepeducation.org).

TRY TO PROVIDE STRUCTURE: A consistent schedule can help kids and teens know what to expect and adjust. Knowing how the day will go can help you get through it more easily, too.

- For younger children (PreK-Grade 5): If multiple caregivers will be in your home, post a visual schedule so kids know who will be taking care of them and when you will be available. Review the schedule every day.
- If possible, find some time during the day when you ask children not to interrupt you unless there is an emergency. You need this time to process your own feelings and take care of yourself. Help children understand when these times are and what they should do during those times.

### FIND WAYS TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL CONNECTION:

Social support is critical for getting through difficult experiences. *School-aged children should have opportunities to connect with classmates, friends, or relatives every day, if possible.* Find ways to help your child make a phone or video call, write letters or emails, send text messages, and leave the house when possible to see that other community members are also outside (while social distancing). If it is not possible to help your child or teen connect with peers, one strategy that may be helpful is to talk with them about the connection they now share with millions of kids around the world. They truly are all in this together, and this moment will be in the history books from this day forward. That sense of connection may be helpful.

### HTSD & COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- [HTSD MENTAL HEALTH WEBSITE](#)
- HAMILTON CARES (609) 476-6138
- NJ MENTAL HEALTH CARES:  
1-866-202-HELP
- ATLANTICARE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
(609) 646-9159
- [ATLANTIC COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION](#)