



# School District No. 60

PEACE RIVER NORTH

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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OFFICE**

March 21, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

During these uncertain and challenging times it is normal to feel worried and overwhelmed. Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with issues surrounding COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents and caregivers can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

The following will provide parents/guardians with strategies to help support students, and adults, during these difficult times.

## **Ways to Manage Stress and Anxiety and Support Our Children**

The COVID-19 pandemic may be a very stressful and frightening time for our children. While it is important to remember that fear and anxiety about disease is normal, excessive worry is not. All individuals will respond differently during stressful times, and anger, confusion and guilt are common ways children respond to world events. However, there are many things we can do as parents to support our children during these extraordinary times. All individuals manage stress in different ways. When stress becomes unhealthy certain actions may arise. Signs of unhealthy stress include, significant fear or worry, change in sleeping patterns, change in diet or eating patterns, change in overall health, and even substance abuse.

When talking to our kids about the current situation, a solution's focused approach is crucial as well as providing kids with specific things they can do to feel some sense of control. Things to keep in mind when having these discussions include:

- Many things are being done to help the current situation (governments, doctor, nurses, schools are working together to keep people healthy and safe)

- It will get better
- Life will return to normal
- Focus on caring for our family and friends

Here are some ways to support our children:

### 1. All Children

- Routines are important and can help to create a sense of predictability and security. Some examples of routines include scheduling daily academic time, outdoor activities and family time. Focus on the moment, mindfulness (sit quietly and focus on breathing and your senses)
- Role model calmness, routine, and a focus on family and friends
- It is appropriate to provide a fact-based discussion on the changing landscape of COVID-19. This discussion should be done in a calm and reassuring tone conveying the message that we are safe. We take precautions, but we are safe. Listen, provide age-appropriate information and focus on prevention (daily handwashing, social distancing)
- Focus on the positive, change in outlook from: 'we are stuck inside' to a focus on family and home

### 2. Older Children

- Social Media: limiting social media and news watching. Watching the news together can provide an opportunity for conversation and help to keep things in perspective. Moderation in gaming time
- Nutrition: eat as healthy as you can. Make balanced meals that you can prepare together
- Sleep: try to ensure that older students are still getting enough sleep.  
[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

### 3. Younger students

- Stress: younger students may show their stress in different ways. For example; crying, irritation, 'acting out', reduced attention and

concentration, regression to an earlier age such as bedwetting, and ceasing activities that they previously enjoyed.

Strategies to help reduce stress in younger students:

- More time with trusted adults
- Increased play time, inside and out
- Routines
- Quiet times, to read books, listen to music, puzzles and playing board games
- Adequate sleep

Younger children may scare more easily than older children so focusing on the positive can be very helpful. As an example, the American Television personality, Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers), had a famous quote: “when I was a boy, I would see scary things on the news, my mother would say to me, look for the helpers, you will always find people that are helping.”

Finally, our kids will feel safer if they express their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. One of our jobs as parents is to role model resiliency, and during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can do our best to be calm and caring. Our children are looking to us to see how we react. Therefore, if you are struggling with stress and anxiety over this pandemic, then it is important that you also seek help. Some resources are listed below. As well, check with your employer to determine if they have counselling services available through local Employee and Family Assistance Programs.

Respectfully,

Carleen Andrews

Director of Instruction

\*\* Additional Sources (Rogers, Smith, Bacchus & Rogers, 2020)

**Local Supports:**

- Child Youth and Mental Health - (250) 263 0121
- Community Bridges (250) 785 6021  
<http://communitybridge.ca/>
- Nenan (Dene Zaa Deh Zona Family Services Society (250) 785 2151  
<http://nenan.ca/>

- Fort St John Friendship Society (250) 785 8566

### **Provincial/National Supports**

- Kelty Mental Health - 1 800 665 1822  
<https://kelymentalhealth.ca/>
- Kids help phone: 1 800 668 6868
- Crisis Line: 1 888 562 1214  
<https://crisis-centre.ca/>
- BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/mental-health-addictions>  
<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20200320/covid-19stress-management.pdf>
- Canadian Association of Mental Health and Addictions  
[Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)  
[COVID19\\_StressManagement 5](#)

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Our regular communication channels include our primary channel, [www.prn.bc.ca](http://www.prn.bc.ca) , social media via [www.facebook.com/sd60prn](http://www.facebook.com/sd60prn) & [www.twitter.com/sd60](http://www.twitter.com/sd60) , and email.

Collected updates and resources about COVID-19 are available at [https://www.prn.bc.ca/?page\\_id=4525](https://www.prn.bc.ca/?page_id=4525) .