

Mental Health Resources

March 26, 2020 – NYSED Mental Health COVID-19 Guidance

In response to the widespread anxiety related to COVID-19, NYSED issued guidance regarding mental health resources which may be valuable during the current outbreak. Additionally, the New York Office of Mental Health (OMH) has created an Emotional Support Line where specially trained volunteers are available to assist callers with mental health needs. This line may be accessed by calling 1-844-863-9314.

The NYSED guidance contains links to an array of other useful publications. For example, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has created a [parent resource](#) to help discuss COVID-19 with concerned children. This resource advises parents to remain calm and honest with children, correcting misinformation and providing them with a sense of control to reduce fear. It suggests that parents spend time listening to their children, while modeling healthy behavior. Useful ways to reduce a child's stress include deep breathing exercises, maintaining a daily routine, and providing alternatives to social media and television so that children can feel actively engaged.

Additionally, the NASP has a [resource](#) to help educators address their own mental health needs. Although it may be easy for educators to forget to prioritize their mental health during these hectic and demanding times, educators must continue to monitor their own mental health so that they may identify signs of burnout and other mental health conditions. The NASP advises that extreme reactions may warrant professional support or monitoring. These warning signs include the inability to stop thinking about the COVID-19 crisis, physical reactions such as chronic fatigue, emotional reactions such as excessive anxiety, irritability, or distressing suicidal thoughts, and behavioral reactions such as substance/alcohol abuse and social withdrawal.

March 16, 2020 – NYSOMH Mental Health Guidance

On March 16, 2020, the New York State Office of Mental Health posted guidance on stress management during the COVID-19 situation. It discusses ways of managing personal anxiety as well as helping others. Individual methods include reducing anxiety through risk reduction, maintaining a schedule, practicing self-care and exercising, joining virtual support networks, and discussing enjoyable topics which are not related to COVID-19. When talking to children, the guidance suggests that adults remain honest but limit COVID-19 discussion to responding to the questions that children ask. Additionally, the guidance reiterates that routines and fun tasks are great ways to lower the stress levels of children.