



Lynn Public Schools Support for Families on How to Manage Stress and Tips on Covid-19 Activities to Keep Our Families Safe.

We wanted to pause and acknowledge the stress and suffering that many may be experiencing during the holiday season and as the impacts of the pandemic continue to be seen. We also want to convey a message of gratitude and hope. For many, holidays may trigger past losses, difficult emotions, and reminders of painful experiences. For those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic there are additional stressors. Many of our families are experiencing homelessness, mental health/medical challenges, food and housing insecurity, loss of income, and loss of loved ones due to COVID19. We hope this document provides meaningful information and tips for how to manage the stress many may be feeling during this difficult time.

How to Manage Holiday Stress

- **Strengthen social connections**—We know that strong, supportive relationships help us manage all kinds of challenges. Holidays can be a time to reconnect with the people in our lives. For some this reconnection can be joy filled, for many it can bring up difficult emotions. Accepting help and support from those who care about us can help alleviate stress. Make a plan to connect with people who are supportive and encouraging and who can help you navigate the stress the season can bring. If you are looking for another way to connect to your community, volunteering with a local charity, on your own or with family, can be another way to make connections; helping others often makes us feel better, too.
- **Initiate conversations about the season**—As our world becomes increasingly diverse, it is more important than ever to provide opportunities for all children to develop a richer understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. Depending on a child's age, we can use the holiday season as an opportunity to talk with children about the values often associated with holidays: gratitude, generosity, peace, joy, kindness, and compassion. It is a wonderful way to spark a curiosity for learning about and honoring all cultures, experiences, and traditions.
- **Set expectations**—It is helpful to set realistic expectations. It has become increasingly challenging to balance the competing demands we are faced with every day. In addition to these daily demands, we often place unrealistic expectations on ourselves. This can leave us feeling overwhelmed. We need to gently remind ourselves to pare down our expectations. Instead of trying to take on everything, try to identify the most important tasks and take small concrete steps to accomplish them. We are all trying to do the best we can during this



unprecedented time. It is not about perfection. We need to extend ourselves grace now more than ever.

- **Keep things in perspective**—On the whole, the holiday season is short. Keeping this mindset helps to maintain a broader context and a longer-term perspective. We can ask ourselves, what is the worst thing that could happen if things aren't exactly as you planned or hoped? Remember, we all struggle sometimes, and we all need support at different times and in different ways. While the holidays may not be what we hope for we can tap our strengths and the help of others. There will be time after the holiday season to follow up or do more of the things we have overlooked or did not have the time to do during the holidays.
- **Take care of yourself**—It is important that we pay attention to our own needs and feelings during the holiday season. We can find fun, enjoyable and relaxing activities for ourselves and our families. By keeping our minds and bodies healthy, we are primed to deal with stressful situations when they arise. Consider activities that bring the family together such as getting the family out together for fresh air and a winter walk. Physical activity can help us feel better and sleep well. Also be mindful of time spent watching television, this could lead to exposure to stress-inducing advertisements. There is support and resources available through our student support staff and in the larger community. Please do not hesitate to reach out and let us know how we can support you and your family at this time.

Activities to do at Home During Winter Break:

4-6 years old: Create new, quarantine-approved traditions

- Establish traditions within your immediate family – make a home-made gift, play a game or cook a special meal together.
- Instead of in-person visits with friends, family, and loved ones consider fun ways to have a video interaction, write letters or make cards.
- Encourage children to express how they are feeling about changes that have happened this year. Tell them that it's okay to feel sad, disappointed or angry.
- Find the positive and teach positive self-talk. For example, "Since we don't have to travel, we get extra time to relax and play at home."

6-12 years old: Help your child cope with holiday blues – and build resilience for the future

- At this age, children understand the precautions that need to be taken due to COVID-19.
- Validate their feelings of disappointment and sadness about changes to their holiday traditions: It's normal and OK to feel angry, frustrated or sad.
- Remember that helping children overcome disappointment helps them build resiliency.
- Ask them for their ideas about how to make the holidays special.



- Teach fun relaxation strategies –Try Yoga for the first time, or practice slow breathing- in and out, the scent of a favorite treat, lotion or candle.

13-18 years old: Ask, listen and encourage COVID-safe holiday activities

- Ask teens how they are feeling.
- Let them know you are there if they need to talk.
- Listen! Often, teens just want someone to listen and not solve the problem for them.
- Offer perspective on the situation by looking at the big picture.
- Allow them a sense of control by giving them choices.
- Encourage positive social activities to honor the holiday season, such as how to volunteer in a socially distanced way.

Parents and caregivers: Manage your own disappointment about this holiday season too

- Allow yourself to feel sad, worried or angry.
- Do something to nurture yourself.
- Adjust your expectations.
- Look at the big picture. Reinforce hopeful messages.
- Plan times to connect with someone who is supportive of you and your family during this stressful time.
- Children take cues from the adults in their life. The better equipped adults are able to maintain a positive, and calm demeanor, children will pick up on that and do the same.

Additional Resources:

- <https://www.apa.org/topics/parents-holiday>
- <https://www.connecticutchildrens.org/coronavirus/how-to-help-kids-handle-holiday-disappointment-during-covid-19/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Keeping-the-holidays-happy.aspx>

Check out the LPS Activity Calendars on your Parent/Student Schoology Accounts Click on the links for activities and much more