

TEXAS PHYSICIANS SAY:

# YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS MATTER



[texmed.org](http://texmed.org)



**Texas Pediatric Society**  
The Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
INCORPORATED IN TEXAS

[txpeds.org](http://txpeds.org)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, families have experienced a variety of difficult and stressful situations. For children, school closures, virtual learning, change in routine, and social isolation have taken a physical and mental toll on their emotional wellbeing.

To help you and your child navigate these uncertain times, physicians with the Texas Medical Association School Reopening Workgroup and the Texas Pediatric Society want you to recognize the signs of stress in your child, and actions you can take to help them.

## 1 LOOK FOR SIGNS

Children show stress in different ways. Here are some behaviors to look for:

- Anxiety or Nervousness
- More Withdrawn
- Easily Frustrated
- Anger/Irritability
- Change in Usual Sleeping Patterns
- Outbursts
- Mood Swings
- Sadness
- Drug or Alcohol Use
- Trouble Focusing

## 2 SEEK HELP

The following people can help you cope and help your child if you're concerned.

- Your Child's Doctor or Your Doctor
- School Counselor, Teacher, or Coach
- Community Support Services
- Trusted Family Member or Friend
- Your Clergy/Religious Leaders

## 3 TAKE ACTION

If you choose to see your child's physician, they will check their mind and body for any physical illness. They may talk to you about how medication can address the way your child feels. They also may recommend therapy or counseling to help your child deal with his/her emotions.

**If you choose to see a therapist, it's important to be persistent in scheduling the initial appointment and to choose someone who makes you and your child feel comfortable.**

**Here are some questions to ask when seeking a therapist:**

- Are they accepting new patients?
- Do they take your insurance or provide sliding scale payments?
- When is the next appointment?
- Do they have options to meet over video chat as well as in person?
- What steps can you take while waiting for an appointment?

**When you choose therapy or counseling for your child, you may be involved by:**

- Meeting with the therapist along with your child
- Learning new skills to support your child
- Create a new plan or routine at home

## 4 IDENTIFY FEELINGS AND TAKE STEPS

A child's feelings and behavior may indicate they are under stress. The table to the right can help you recognize your child's emotions, let them know that that it is acceptable to acknowledge those feelings, and then suggest steps they can take to help them cope positively and effectively.

As a parent or caregivers, you also may be experiencing an unusual amount of stress. It's important to acknowledge and address your own feelings so that you can be best prepared to help your child.

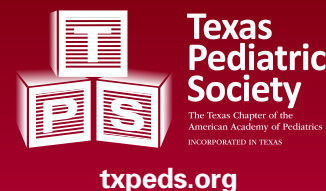
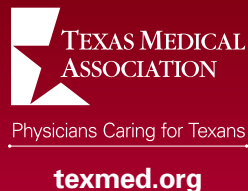


HOW DO YOU FEEL?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
<b>HAPPY, CALM, CONTENT</b> Smiling, Laughing, Engaged	Help someone else Notice and enjoy your positive mood Engage in an enjoyable activity
<b>SAD, NEGATIVE, LONELY</b> Crying, Withdrawn, Disengaged	Set a positive goal for the day Call a friend or relative Journal about your feelings
<b>ANXIOUS, WORRIED, UNSETTLED</b> Pacing, Avoiding, Clingy	Talk to a family member/friend Pay attention to each of your 5 senses Focus on what you can control
<b>FRUSTRATED, ANNOYED, IRRITABLE</b> Arguing, Refusing, Shutting down	Meditate/pray Listen to favorite music Take a fast-paced walk
<b>ANGRY, FURIOUS, EXPLOSIVE</b> Yelling, Stomping, Meltdown	Vigorous physical exercise Breathe deep breaths Take a warm shower or bath

Some feelings may be more concerning than others. **If your child talks about harming themselves or others, do not ignore it and contact a health care professional immediately.** The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can assist and can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 273-8255.

TEXAS PHYSICIANS SAY:

# YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS MATTER



Racial stress can make mental health worse for children and adolescents. How to talk about it and get help:

- <https://www.apa.org/res/parent-resources/racial-stress>
- <https://discoveries.childrenshospital.org/racism-child-health/>
- <https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/how-to-talk-to-children-about-racism>

Families whose children are questioning or talking about their gender identity or sexual orientation and undergoing significant stress can contact:

- <https://pflag.org/hotlines>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sexual-orientation.html?WT.ac=hottopic>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry ([www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)):  
[Family](#) and [Youth](#) Resources
- MGH Clay Center ([www.mghclaycenter.org](http://www.mghclaycenter.org))
- Campaign to Change Direction ([changedirection.org](http://changedirection.org))
- Crisis hotlines and resources ([American Psychological Association](http://American Psychological Association))
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org))
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network ([www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org))

**NOTICE:** This publication is intended for general informational purposes only. The information provided in this publication does not constitute legal or medical advice and does not ensure a successful outcome. This publication does not substitute for the advice of your or your child's own physician or other health care professional. Consulting your or your child's own physician is always a good practice when faced with health issues to obtain specific medical advice taking into consideration your or your child's medical situation. You should not rely on this information when dealing with your or your child's health matters; rather medical advice from your or your child's own physician should be sought. Although the Texas Medical Association (TMA) and the Texas Pediatric Society (TPS) have attempted to present materials that are accurate and useful, some material may be outdated and TMA and TPS shall not be liable to anyone for any inaccuracy, error or omission, regardless of cause, or for any damages resulting therefrom.

Certain links provided with this information connect to websites maintained by third parties. TMA and TPS have no control over these websites, or the information, goods or services provided by third parties. TMA and TPS shall have no liability for any use or reliance by a user on these third-party websites or information provided by third parties.

This publication is also not intended to establish medical standards of care for the purposes of litigation, including expert testimony. The standard of care is dependent upon the particular facts and circumstances of each individual case and no generalization can be made that would apply to all cases.