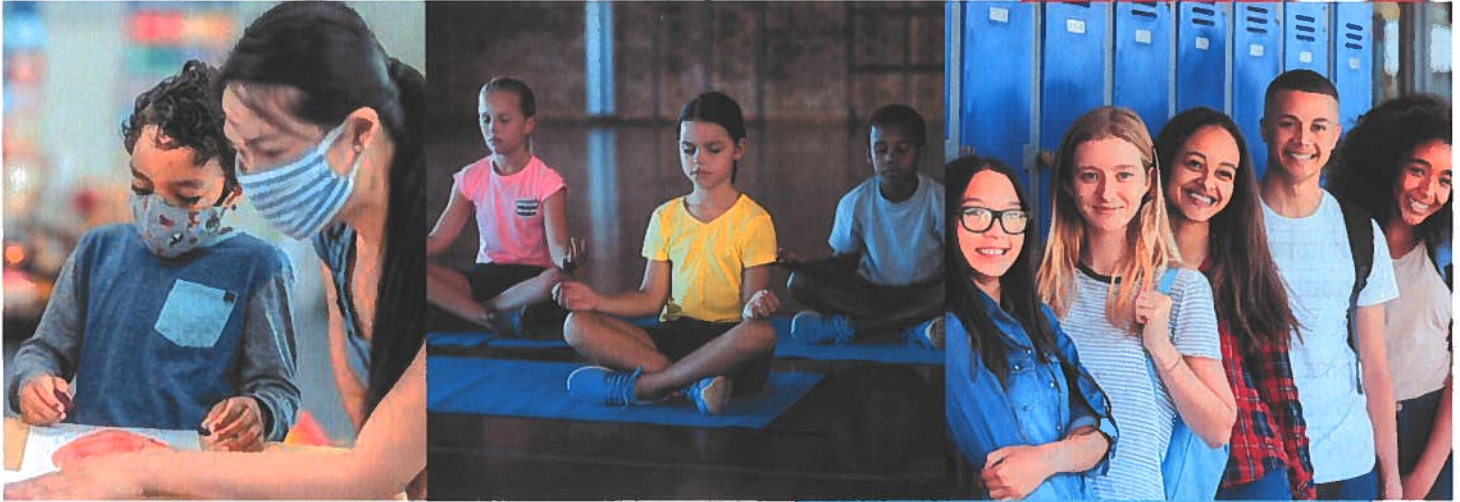


LIFE AS A STUDENT DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Change is Stressful

All change is stressful, even good change. The start of a new school year involves a lot of change even in the best of times. If you are starting a new school, switching from virtual classes to in person, or moving up from middle to high school, you're probably dealing with a lot of change. In any case, this year is likely to be different compared to past years. Keep in mind that change can be both a challenge and an opportunity.

Supportive Relationships

When we are going through rough times it helps to have someone to talk to. If you have supportive friends around you, great! Talk to them. They can probably relate to what you're going through. If you don't have any close friends right now, reach out. There are great people around you. You just don't know them yet. It doesn't take much to start a conversation - a smile, saying "hey" or asking a person's name is all it takes.

Friends are great and oh so important, but sometimes they aren't enough. Sometimes you need support from an adult. Believe it or not, your parents and the other adults in your life want to be supportive to you, but they don't always know how. Talking to them helps them to know whether you need help, and if you do, what kind of help is needed.

BACK TO SCHOOL, BUT NOT YET NORMAL

The past year has been stressful for everyone. As you start the new school year there are a few things to keep in mind to help yourself start the year off on the right track. Your teachers know that everyone isn't starting out in the same place. The last school year was very unusual and brought a lot of challenges.

Some students managed to stay on track, others fell behind. Wherever you are, know that it's OK.

COVID-19 hasn't gone away yet. People are still getting sick from the virus and people can still spread the virus even if they don't seem to be sick. There are also new variants or versions of the virus that are easier to catch. That means it is still necessary to be very careful. It can be hard to know what is the best way to keep everyone safe and the rules may change as the people in charge find out new information.

Emotions

Emotions – we all have them. They're all valid – meaning it's OK to feel whatever you feel. They give us valuable information about what we're going through and what we need. They don't always come along at the most convenient times, and it can sometimes feel awkward to be emotional in front of other people.

An important thing to know about emotions is that, while it is OK to feel any emotion, some of the behaviors people do when emotional are not OK. It is never OK to be mean, hurtful or destructive, no matter what emotion(s) you are feeling or how strong those emotions are. Emotions need to be released. Holding them in only works for very short times if it works at all. If you are feeling strong emotions, having a jumble of feelings that are hard to figure out or struggling to think of a safe and constructive way to express what you are feeling, talk to a trusted adult who can help you to find appropriate options.



Practice Self-Care

You deserve to be treated well. The first person that needs to be taking care of you is you. Make sure you are getting enough sleep, eating healthy and getting exercise. Try to find an appropriate balance between doing what needs to be done and doing what you enjoy. If you are struggling with strong emotions, use your resources and coping strategies. Sometimes we can be our own worst critics and bullies. Give yourself permission to be human, forgive yourself when you are less than perfect and take time to enjoy it when good things happen.

Structure & Routines

Young people don't always like hearing this, but structure and routine are really helpful. They give us an idea of what to expect from others and what others expect from us. By providing a degree of predictability to our days, following a consistent routine means we don't have to think as hard about what we're going to do next. This gives our already overworked minds a much-needed break, freeing up mental energy we can use for other tasks, like paying attention in class, completing assignments and remembering the information we are supposed to be learning.

Types of routines that can help:

- Getting on a sleep schedule.
- Getting a good night's rest.
- Eating meals & snacks at a regular time.
- Exercising consistently.
- Having a hygiene routine.



Professional Help

If you find that you are having emotional distress that doesn't go away and that the strategies you're using to cope just aren't enough, reach out for professional help. Talk to your school counselor about helping you to connect with a therapist. Call **Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health** at 330-433-6075 to schedule an appointment to speak with professional behavioral health clinician. If you or someone you know is thinking that life isn't worth living, help is available any time, day or night.

Call the National Suicide Lifeline at 800-273-8255

Text 4HOPE to 741-741

Call the Crisis Center at 330-452-6000



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