



Los Angeles Unified School District
STUDENT HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

Coping with the Emotional Stresses of our Current Economic Times

- In this economic climate, there is a potential to feel *overwhelmed, powerless, worried, shocked and a loss of control.*
- It is possible to feel by turns, *hopeless and hopeful, anxious and confident, angry and resigned, confused and curious.*
- Families overwhelmed by the economic crisis may experience *sleeplessness, nightmares, inability to concentrate and a change in appetite.* Here are some ideas about how to cope:

LISTEN

Supporting children:	Children can be very resilient if they know their parents love them and will care for them. Although it may be painful for parents to hear children talk about their fears or questions, it is helpful to listen and understand. Children usually can tell when there are difficulties at home so not talking to them about it just increases their anxiety. While our instinct may be to "protect" them, leaving them out may lead them to assume things are worse than they are. Children are also learning how to behave in future crises. Whether it is financial loss or any other kinds of losses, they're learning from the behavior of the adults around them.
Reflecting on what is working and has worked for us in the past:	Answer the following questions about the ways of coping that have worked for you in the past. <i>With all you've been through, how do you manage to get to sleep? What has been helpful to get you through so far? Have you been in this situation before? What did you do to get through it then? What was most helpful to you? How did you know that would be helpful? What else was helpful?</i>

CONNECT

You are not alone – stay connected:	One of the best ways to weather this storm is to reach out, communicate and allow yourself to give and receive support from friends, family and resources in your community. Doing so may have a positive effect on both you and your family.
Using strengths:	We all have strengths that help us bounce back from adversity. Research shows that some of these strengths include: relationships, humor, inner direction, perceptiveness, independence, positive view of personal future, flexibility, love of learning, self-motivation, competence, self-worth, spirituality, perseverance, and creativity. How can you draw upon your strengths to deal with the challenges you are facing?
Values and Priorities:	It may prove inspiring to focus on what is most important to us. We often hear disaster survivors saying things like, "We're alive and that's what counts." It may be helpful to make a list of your positive characteristics, things that matter and for which you feel grateful.



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PROTECT

Self-care and well-being:	Staying healthy ensures that we maintain the physical and mental capacity necessary to deal with problems and stress. That's why it is important to eat and sleep well and get regular physical exercise. Going for walks as a family can relieve stress and promote family bonding.
Choose your thoughts:	While it's useful to learn from mistakes so as not to repeat them in the future, it's also clear that self-blame may not be helpful while in the middle of a crisis. "What if" and "If only" thoughts may not be beneficial when events are beyond our control.
Taking a news break:	Some amount of anxiety is healthy because it motivates us to do things, but too much anxiety can interfere with our ability to think straight. Don't saturate yourself with stressful information from the media. Stay informed and take a news break.

MODEL

Maintain family routines:	Keeping family routines - such as eating meals together, reading bedtime stories and maintaining family rules, like expecting children to assist with household chores and to do well in school - gives a family a sense of stability. When children have routines and stability, it gives them the assurance that <i>their family and parents are in control</i> . If children don't feel secure, they can become anxious and worried, and their school work can suffer. Children are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug use, when there is a family structure and parents are interested in and involved in their lives.
Relaxation and meditation:	We can learn techniques to help us reduce stress. Remember that stress takes a physical toll. Learn meditation and do muscle relaxation. Pay attention to yourself and body.

TEACH

Choose your outlook:	Optimism, a tendency to expect the best, or at least, a good outcome, is contagious and research shows that it is powerful and can be learned. Optimism can decrease the likelihood of becoming depressed or aid in recovering more quickly; increase the likelihood that we keep trying instead of giving up; become the primary determinant of health as we get older; and impact the way that we explain the good and bad things that happen – an explanatory style that may last for most of our lives and get passed on to our children by what we say to them.
Take advantage of resources:	Sometimes people feel it's embarrassing to ask for help. Seeking assistance means you are proactive and makes you feel less passive and isolated.



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BE AWARE

<p>Signs and symptoms of serious emotional problems:</p>	<p>If something is bothering you, tell others. If you observe problematic behavior in others, ask the person about it. Next, do something about it. Be on the lookout for increased <i>anxiety, depression, sleeping or eating too much or too little, substance abuse, arguing, fighting, hitting and thoughts of suicide</i>. During difficult times, domestic violence and substance abuse occur more frequently. Seek counseling or medical help immediately.</p>
<p>Be aware of the warning signs of suicide:</p>	<p>Threatening or talking about death or suicide, hopelessness, changes in behavior, giving away possessions, risky behaviors, signs of significant depression/irritability/agitation, feelings of failure or shame. What you can do: listen without criticism, take all threats seriously, let them know you care, seek professional help, remove access to means of suicide, inform family members and friends.</p>

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, please call:

Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center
 (Trained Counselors available 24 hours 7 days a week)
1.877.7CRISIS or 1.877.727.4747
www.suicidepreventioncenter.org

For information about School Mental Health Services in your Local District please contact:

- Local District 1 & 2** **(818) 997-2640**
- Local District 3 & 7** **(323) 750-5167**
- Local District 4 & 5** **(323) 224-3363**
- Local District 6 & 8** **(310) 513-8070**



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