

We have heard from parents that some are feeling worried for their children. Parents are worried this crisis is harming their children, that they are going to mess up their kids by getting easily flustered and frustrated trying to help their children get through the school day. They are worried their children will fall behind. All this and so much more can cause feelings of anxiety and frustration. It is true that children's cognitive learning is built on a secure emotional foundation, so if your child continually sees you unhappy or anxious, it can start to inhibit their own development.

But what's the alternative when this is such a stressful time for parents and it is so difficult to maintain a calm and attentive climate for kids?

Try to focus on creating fun, low-key learning opportunities for your kids whenever you can. Kids are resilient and they'll undoubtedly get the content knowledge they need. Right now, a major focus should be making them feel loved, secure and safe amidst these disruptions. Learning can't occur until those things are in place.

Children need our direct communication and emotional support and when the external world is full of change, we need to make sure our children's family world is marked by honesty, understanding, and connection. As parents, let's try to be reliable captains through the choppy waters ahead; this allows our children to feel safe and build resilience amidst the stormy weather. You can support your child by being honest and direct and sit with your child in the discomfort of not-knowing. We hope to go back to in person classes soon, but we just don't know. What we can feel good about is that when we go back, we will know it's because we are safe to do so.

We all like lists and categorization systems; they help us feel in control and prepared in the face of change. Make a two column list and label what you know and what you don't know to help your child access their own agency and resilience through this transition. For parents, the most effective way to teach these emotional skills is by practicing them yourself. First, show up to your child's emotions by listening to their feelings and validating their experiences. Second, help them to label their emotions and identify their own solutions. By doing this, what you are demonstrating is that we own our emotions - they don't own us. When worry and stress take hold, Remember our acronym from last Spring and HALT! Stop and ask yourself if you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. Giving attention to this alert signal can bring you back into balance. If one or a combination of the four states is present, slow down, take a few breaths, and chill. If you're hungry, take the time to eat. If you're angry, address it in a healthy manner. If you're lonely, reach out to someone you trust. And if you're tired, rest.

As kids start school with more online learning, you may be worrying whether they'll ever catch up. A useful question is, 'How do we ensure that our children get the best possible opportunities to learn under these challenging circumstances?' Since we all have by now experienced how hard it is to teach and motivate kids, let's remember that teachers are doing this for many students and may also have their own kids to homeschool. They may be overwhelmed, too. But with a little empathy and a commitment to our communities, we can get through this together.

This school year is likely to be filled with ups and downs, changes upon changes, and a variety of emotions from kids and adults. We must connect to ourselves with compassion, understanding, and patience before we're able to connect to our kids in this way. Remind yourself, "This is a tough time to be a parent. I'm doing the best I can. I am doing enough. I am enough." You got this.

Going back to school comes with a lot of extra stress this year. Kids may be struggling to manage their feelings about the pandemic. They may be worried about things like getting sick or falling behind in school. Whatever is on their mind, keep track of what you're seeing and help them get the emotional support they need. Contact your ST to help identify school based supports or look to these supports in the larger community. We try to be available by phone or email as much as possible, but immediate emergency help is also available **24 hours a day** through the following agencies:

Nevada County Adult Behavioral Health 530-265-1437