



CARD

ADVANCING
SCIENCE
& PRACTICE

Center for Anxiety Related Disorders

PARENTING DURING COVID-19

A GUIDE TO MANAGING
(CHILD) ANXIETY

PRESENTED BY THE CENTER FOR ANXIETY AND RELATED DISORDERS AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Alex Keller, M.A.
Hillary Ditmars, M.A.
Rachel Merson, Psy.D.

AGENDA

- ACTIONS: Creating behavioral change
- THOUGHTS: Developing more balanced thoughts
- RESPONSE: Responding to our kids' anxiety

FOCUS ON
ACTIONS:
POSITIVE CHANGE
THROUGH BEHAVIOR
MODIFICATION

PART ONE

HOW ARE WE FEELING?

Anxious

Frustrated

Guilty

Sad

Angry

HOW ARE WE FEELING? + HOW ARE KIDS FEELING?



ANXIETY + NEGATIVE EMOTION

- Born out of:
 - Feelings of uncertainty
 - Loss of control
- Counter response: **Increase control**
 - Increase agency
 - Respond purposefully to negative emotions

STEP 1: WHAT DO EMOTIONS TELL US ABOUT VALUES?

Emotion

- I'm **SAD** that I don't get to spend time with my friends
- I'm **SCARED** that I am going to get the coronavirus
- I'm **AFRAID** that grandma is going to get the virus
- I feel **GUILTY** that I cannot do anything to help
- I feel **ANGRY** that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus

Value

STEP 1: WHAT DO EMOTIONS TELL US ABOUT VALUES?

Emotion

- I'm **SAD** that I don't get to spend time with my friends
- I'm **SCARED** that I am going to get the coronavirus
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- I feel **GUILTY** that I cannot do anything to help
- I feel **ANGRY** that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus

Value

- I value **SOCIAL CONNECTION**
- I value my **PHYSICAL HEALTH**
- I value my **LOVED ONES**
- I value my **PURPOSE**; contribution to society
- I value trustworthy **POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**

STEP 1: WHAT DO EMOTIONS TELL US ABOUT VALUES?

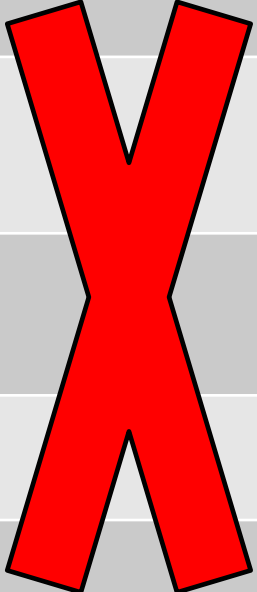
Emotion	Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm SAD that I don't get to spend time with my friends• I'm SCARED that I am going to get the coronavirus• I'm AFRAID that grandma is going to get the virus• I feel GUILTY that I cannot do anything to help• I feel ANGRY that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I value SOCIAL CONNECTION• I value my PHYSICAL HEALTH• I value my LOVED ONES• I value my PURPOSE; contribution to society• I value trustworthy POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

STEP 2: RESPOND TO THE VALUE

EMOTION	VALUE	RESPONSE
I'm sad that I don't get to spend time with my friends		
I'm scared that I am going to get the coronavirus		
I'm afraid that my 75-year-old mom might get the virus		
I feel guilty that I cannot do anything to help		
I feel angry that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus		

STEP 2: RESPOND TO THE VALUE

UNHELPFUL RESPONSE

EMOTION	VALUE	LESS HELPFUL RESPONSE *
I'm sad that I don't get to spend time with my friends		Netflix binge; Instagram binge; cookie dough binge
I'm scared that I am going to get the coronavirus		Stay glued to the news all day to keep abreast of the situation
I'm afraid that my 75-year-old mom might get the virus		Yell at mom to stay inside
I feel guilty that I cannot do anything to help		Compare self to medical first responders
I feel angry that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus		Yell at television; compose angry Facebook rants

STEP 2: RESPOND TO THE VALUE

DEFINE THE VALUE

EMOTION	VALUE	RESPONSE
I'm sad that I don't get to spend time with my friends	Social Connection	
I'm scared that I am going to get the coronavirus	Physical Health	
I'm afraid that my 75-year-old mom might get the virus	Loved Ones	
I feel guilty that I cannot do anything to help	Purpose	
I feel angry that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus	Political leadership	

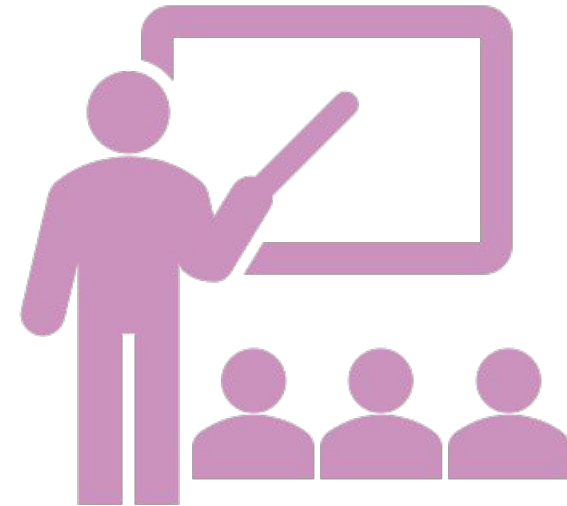
STEP 2: RESPOND TO THE VALUE

MORE HELPFUL RESPONSE

EMOTION	VALUE	MORE HELPFUL RESPONSE
I'm sad that I don't get to spend time with my friends	Social Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Schedule regular Zoom/Skype/Facetime gatherings with friends-For kids, texting silly pictures of yourself to friends to make them smile (for younger kids)-writing a friend a letter to let them know how much their friendship means to you...
I'm scared that I am going to get the coronavirus	Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Do a 10-minute at home workout-Plan a meal that makes your body feel good-Continue to practice good social distancing; handwashing
I'm afraid that my 75-year-old mom might get the virus	Loved Ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Call mom more often-Send her a card to let her know you are thinking of her-Help her plan grocery deliveries
I feel guilty that I cannot do anything to help	Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Continue to practice good social distancing-Think about other ways you can contribute that align with your values (sewing masks; fostering a shelter animal)
I feel angry that the government did not respond quickly enough to warnings about the coronavirus	Political Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Call your senators to support the #votefromhome campaign in light of ongoing social distancing concerns-Donate to or volunteer for your preferred presidential campaign

STEP 3: DEFINING VALUES IN KIDS

- Same principles apply!
- Use a visual aid/worksheet to guide you
- Different language for different age groups





Living in Line with my Values During Quarantine

Quarantine can make your life feel like it is on PAUSE, but we can still live in line with our values during this time. Living in line with our values means doing things that are important to us, that make us feel strong, fulfilled, and accomplished.

Everyone's values are different, and values may change over time! Some people value working on their relationships with others, while others value strengthening or learning a new skill.

Check off the values that are most important to you:

 Social/ Family <input type="checkbox"/>	Physical <input type="checkbox"/>	Leisure/ Skills <input type="checkbox"/>	 Helping others <input type="checkbox"/>	Academic/ Work <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
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How can you live in line with your values during quarantine? For example, if you value connecting socially, can you have a weekly movie night with friends online? If you value physical exercise, can you go for runs in your neighborhood or try a high intensity interval training video on YouTube? If you value building new skills, can you learn to cook a new meal for your family?

Value #1: _____

Three ways I can live according to my value during quarantine:

- 1.) _____
- 2.) _____
- 3.) _____

Value #2: _____

Three ways I can live according to my value during quarantine:

- 1.) _____
- 2.) _____
- 3.) _____

Value #3: _____

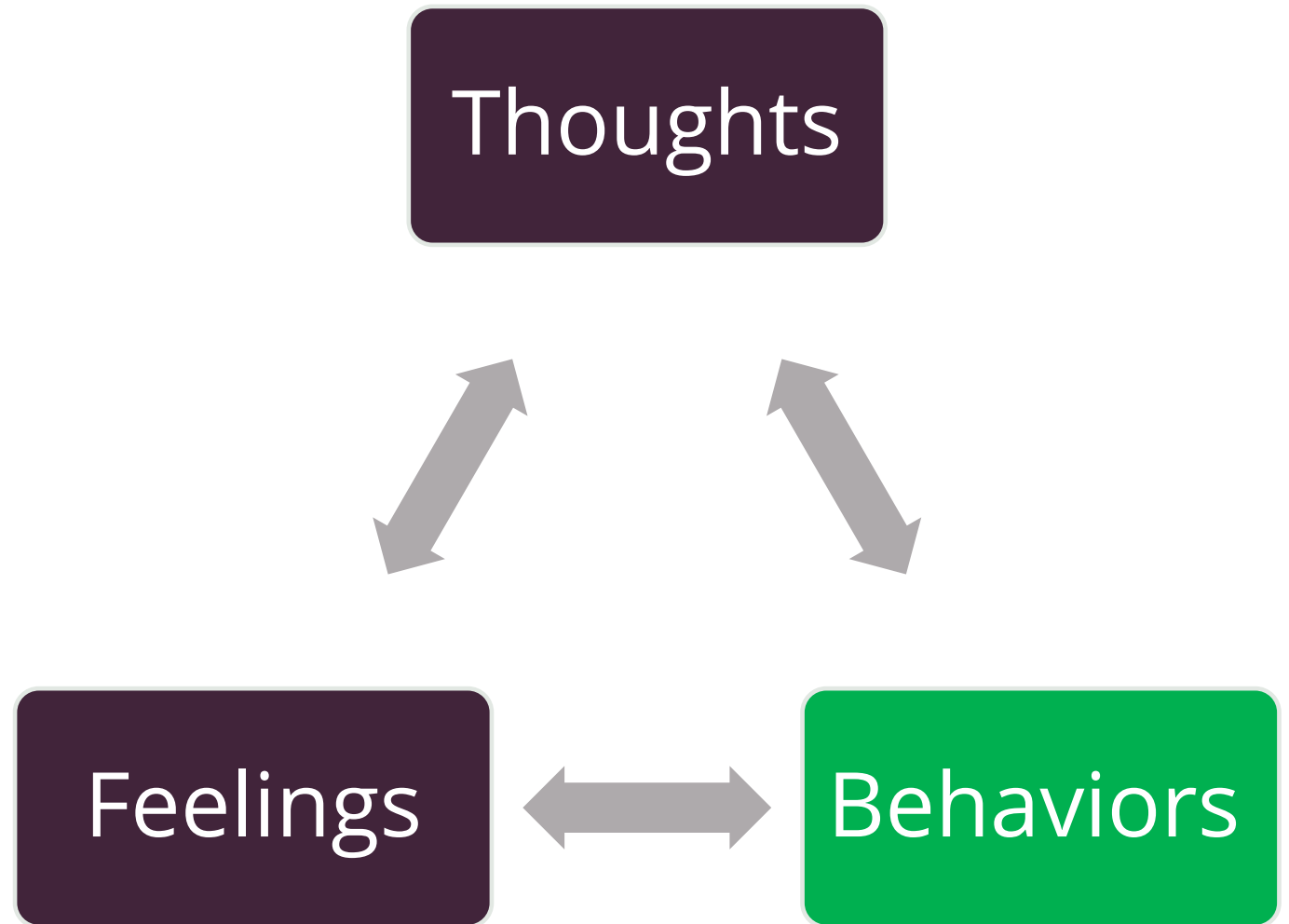
LET'S TRY IT FOR KIDS...

EMOTION	VALUE	MORE HELPFUL RESPONSE
I'm sad that the school play was cancelled		
I'm scared that I am going to do poorly on the SAT since I'm missing so much material this year		
I'm angry at my parents for being on my case about EVERYTHING right now		
I'm BORED.		

LET'S TRY IT FOR KIDS...

EMOTION	VALUE	MORE HELPFUL RESPONSE
I'm sad that the school play was cancelled	Drama; creative expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Plan an at home version of the play with siblings; or a virtual version with friends over Zoom-Choose another creative outlet, such as drawing or painting, if so inclined
I'm scared that I am going to do poorly on the SAT since I'm missing so much material this year	Academic success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Invest in SAT prep material, devote 30 minutes a day to preparing-Stay engaged in online school programming, if offered
I'm angry at my parents for being on my case about EVERYTHING right now	Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Use increased autonomy (e.g. increased alone time in house; autonomy over own schedule) as a reward for completion of required activities
I'm BORED.	Purpose; physical/intellectual engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Create daily schedules that meet physical, social, and educational needs-Have kids and teens help with activities you do not ordinarily involve them in (e.g., meal prep) for daily rewards

CHANGE
YOUR
ACTIONS,
CHANGE
YOUR
EXPERIENCE



HOW VALUE-BASED ACTION CAN INFORM ROUTINES

- Try to build in activities from each value-category each day
 - Social ✓
 - Physical wellbeing ✓
 - Academic achievement ✓
 - Enjoying the great outdoors ✓
 - What does YOUR child value? ✓
- Be flexible + kind to yourself

AND FINALLY...FEEL FREE TO GET CREATIVE!

virtual movie/trivia night



neighborhood "bear" hunt



"nature walk"



backyard camping (weather permitting!)



HELPFUL RESOURCES

1

Talking to kids about emotions

- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Raising Independent Kids](#)

2

Getting creative with value-based activities

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Suggested Simple Activities for Kids and Teens](#)
- [Shared google doc of free/low cost activities](#)
- [Parade.com - 125 ways to keep kids entertained](#)
- [How one community is managing](#)
- [Teen values worksheet](#)

3

Increasing agency for adults, teens, and kids

- [How to help our community](#)
- [Increasing agency: autonomy](#)

4

Establishing routines

- [CNN's tips on finding balance in routines](#)
- [When schedules turn into schedon'ts](#)

5

Keeping moving!

- [Activities for kids](#)
- [Virtual fitness classess for kids and families](#)
- [Active for Life: 200 activities](#)
- [Free Peloton Family](#)

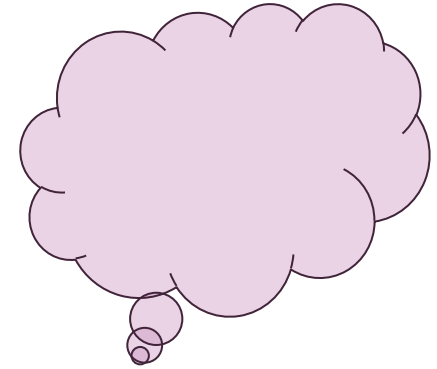
FOCUS ON
THOUGHTS:
TOWARDS A MORE
BALANCED VIEWPOINT

PART TWO

WORRY 101

- What is worry? → **Future-oriented & thought-based**
- Worry can be **helpful**! It may keep us safe, motivated, and productive.
- Worry can also be **unhelpful** if:
 - It becomes overwhelming or uncontrollable
 - We shift to thinking only about worst-case scenarios
 - It leaves us feeling upset or exhausted
 - It gets in the way of living life
- **Anything** can trigger worry; however, certain types of situations might make worry more likely:
 - Ambiguous
 - Novel and new
 - Unpredictable

....At present, all of these factors are in play



AN EXAMPLE OF A WORRY CHAIN

Grandma is
coughing

What if it's
coronavirus?

She's 75 so she's
more likely to
get really sick

What if she has
to go to the
hospital and
there aren't any
ventilators?

What if she dies
alone in the
hospital and we
aren't even able
to visit her?

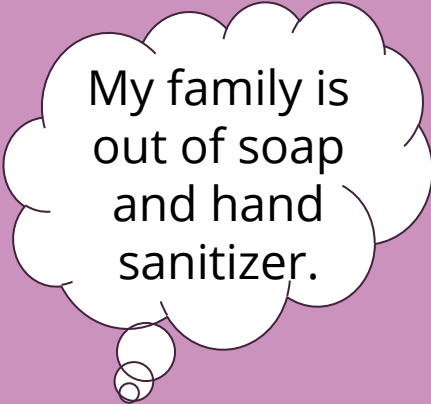
COMMON COVID-19 WORRIES FOR KIDS

- What if my family members, friends, or teachers get the virus?
- What if I get the virus?
- What if my friends are (virtually) hanging out without me?
- What if I fall behind in my schoolwork?
- What if it's too hard to adjust back to school when it reopens?
- What if I can't catch up in all the sports/music/theater/etc. practices I am missing?
- What if my friendships aren't the same after this is over?
- What if my parents' jobs or family finances are affected and don't return to normal?
- What if this keeps going and we are stuck at home for months and months?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORRY

Real problem worries

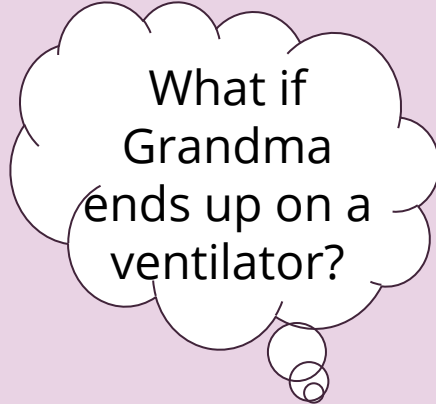
About actual problems that are affecting your child right now



My family is out of soap and hand sanitizer.

Hypothetical worries

About things that do not currently exist, but which might happen in the future



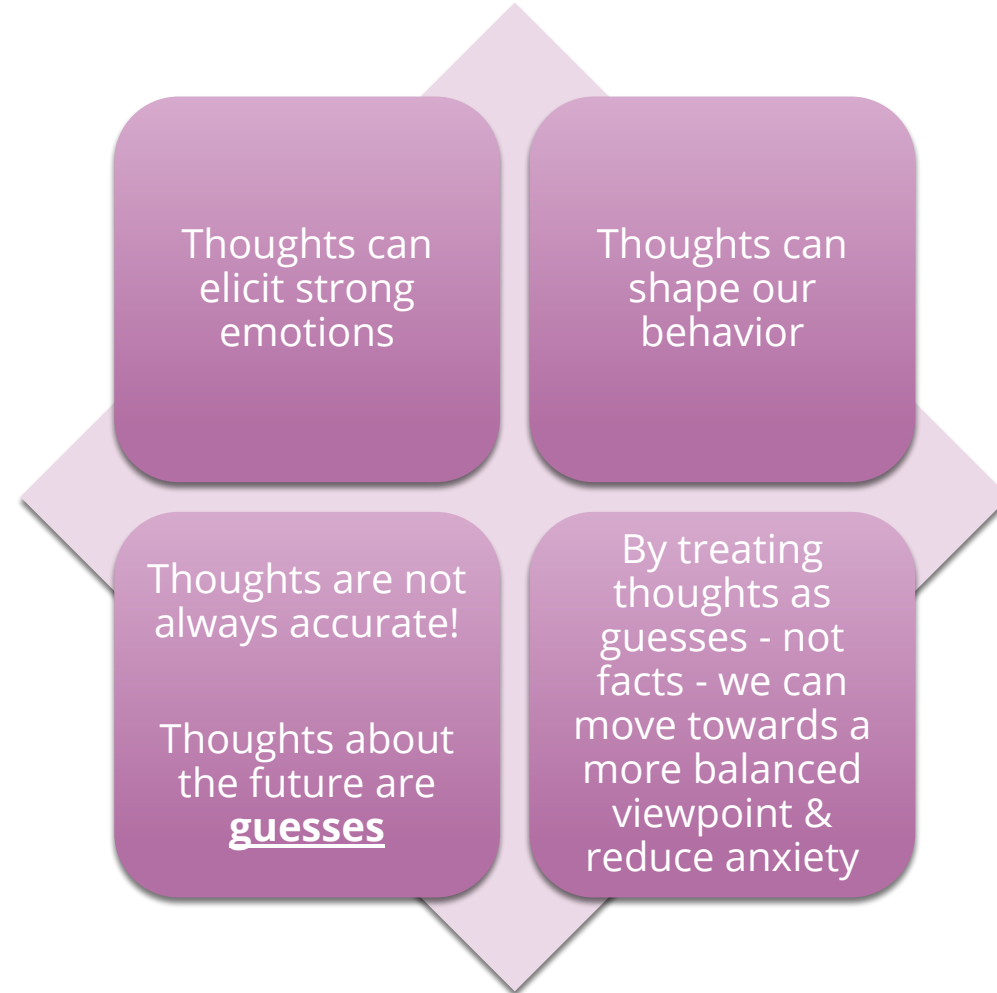
What if Grandma ends up on a ventilator?



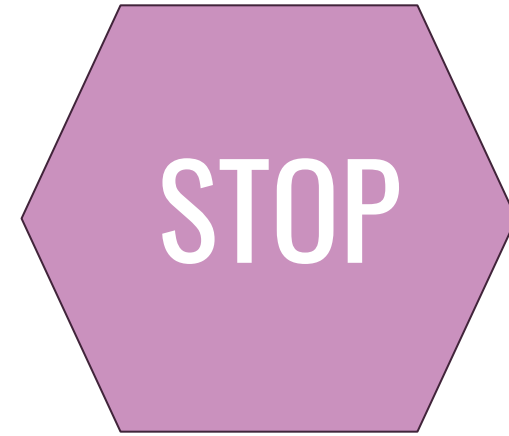
THOUGHT STRATEGY 1: RESTRUCTURING THOUGHTS



THE POWER OF THOUGHTS



RESTRUCTURING THOUGHTS: STEP BY STEP

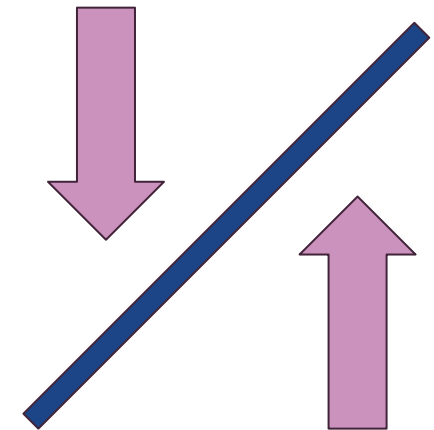


Use **STOP** to restructure worry thoughts:

1. **S** – Ask your child, “What is the **situation** that is making you feel worried right now?”
2. **T** – Ask your child, “What is your worry **thought**?”
3. Support your child in using **detective thinking** to look for evidence for & against this thought
4. **O** – Ask your child, “What is **another**, more balanced thought you could have?”
5. **P - Praise** your child for their hard work coming up with an alternative thought!

RESTRUCTURING THOUGHTS: HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

- To support **detective thinking** and prompt more **balanced** thoughts, you can ask your child questions like:
 - What are the facts?
 - Do you know for sure what is going to happen?
 - What else might happen?
 - What else might be true?
 - Is there another possibility or explanation?
 - Even if that does happen, how could you/we cope with it?



Adapted from Lyneham, H. J., Abbott, M. A., Hudson, J. L., Wignall, A., & Rapee, R. M. (2003).

RESTRUCTURING THOUGHTS: HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

- Resist the temptation to jump in and provide answers!
- If you can encourage your child to use their own detective thinking skills and think of answers to these questions on their own, that will help them exercise their own thought restructuring “muscles”

STOP EXAMPLE 1

1. **S** – Ask your child, "What is the **situation** that is making you feel worried right now?"
Child can't reach friend on FaceTime
2. **T** – Ask your child, "What is your worry **thought**?"
My friend doesn't want to talk to me
3. Support your child in using **detective thinking** to look for evidence for & against this thought
Can ask: Have you been able to talk to your friend this week? What are other ways you can stay connected or reach out instead of FaceTime? What else do you think your friend could be doing in their home right now? Are there other reasons they might be busy or not able to pick up?
4. **O** – Ask your child, "What is **another**, more balanced thought you could have?"
My friend might be busy with their family right now, but that doesn't mean they don't want to talk to me -- I could still text them
5. **P - Praise** your child for their hard work coming up with an alternative thought!
Good thinking!

STOP EXAMPLE 2

1. **S** – Ask your child, “What is the **situation** that is making you feel worried right now?”
Child is transitioning to remote learning
2. **T** – Ask your child, “What is your worry **thought**?”
I am going to fall behind in school work
3. Support your child in using **detective thinking** to look for evidence for & against this thought
Can ask: Do you know what homework you need to do today? What else could happen with your schoolwork besides you falling behind? What could you do to get help if you need it?
4. **O** – Ask your child, “What is **another**, more balanced thought you could have?”
My teachers are still there to help me and are finding new ways to help me learn – and I can ask my parents for help if I get stuck
5. **P - Praise** your child for their hard work coming up with an alternative thought!
Awesome job – I’m so proud of you!

STOP EXAMPLE 3

1. **S** – Ask your child, "What is the **situation** that is making you feel worried right now?"
Child's grandparents are elderly
2. **T** – Ask your child, "What is your worry **thought**?"
Grandma and Grandpa will get the coronavirus
3. Support your child in using **detective thinking** to look for evidence for & against this thought
Can ask: Do you know for sure that that will happen? What else could happen? What are Grandma and Grandpa doing to stay healthy and safe? Do you think there are other grandparents who haven't gotten sick? Even if Grandma and Grandpa did get sick, could they get better?
4. **O** – Ask your child, "What is an **other**, more balanced thought you could have?"
Grandma and Grandpa are being careful and staying at home for their safety
5. **P - Praise** your child for their hard work coming up with an alternative thought!
Way to go!



THOUGHT STRATEGY 2: POSTPONING WORRY



POSTPONING WORRY: STEP BY STEP

- 1. Preparation:** Decide the timing and duration of worry time (e.g., 15 minutes at 7 pm)
- 2. Worry Postponement:** During the day, if your child expresses worries, encourage them to postpone thinking about them until scheduled worry time, and help them redirect their attention to focus on the present
- 3. Worry Time:** During this time, you child can use their dedicated time to worry.
 - Older children may find it helpful to write down the worries they remember having during the day, and consider whether they are still worried about them now
 - Younger children may find some prompting from parents to be helpful (e.g., “Do you remember what you were worried about earlier? Are you still worried about it now?”).
 - During this time, parents can encourage reflection on whether these worries are something the child, or family, can take action on now



THOUGHT STRATEGY 3: PRACTICING MINDFULNESS



PRACTICING MINDFULNESS: STEP BY STEP

When your child expresses a worry thought...

1. Encourage them to **describe** the situation in a fact-based way
 - “We were walking down the street in our neighborhood at 2pm when our neighbor walked by.”
2. Encourage them to describe what **sensations** they notice
 - “I noticed that my muscles were tensing up and my hands were sweaty.”
3. Encourage them to describe what **emotions** they notice
 - “I noticed that I was feeling scared.”
4. Encourage them to describe what **thoughts** they notice
 - “I was having the thought that I could catch the virus from our neighbor.”

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS: HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

- After you help your child mindfully notice their experience, you can ask if anything has changed about their worry thought(s)
- Mindfulness is about paying attention to the **present moment** in a **nonjudgmental** manner
- By supporting your child in practicing mindfulness, you are helping them to redirect their focus to the **here & now** rather than getting swept up in the **"what if"**
- Practicing mindfulness may be especially helpful in tolerating **uncertainty** and enabling kids to focus on **one thing at a time**

Adapted from Ehrenreich-May, J., et al. (2017)

FOCUS ON
RESPONSE:
HOW TO ADDRESS MY
CHILD'S ANXIETY IN
THE MOMENT

PART THREE

THE ABCS OF PARENT “TRAPS”

A

Agreeing with your child's anxious assessment of a situation;

Modeling and reinforcing anxious behavior

B

Butting in;

Overinvolvement, overprotection and intrusiveness;

Limiting opportunities for independence

C

Criticizing or **Coldness;**

Showing frustration or anger towards anxiety;

Behaving less warmly when your child is anxious

EMPATHIZE AND ENCOURAGE

Show empathy
for their
feelings

Express
confidence in
their ability to
face fear

EMPATHIZE AND ENCOURAGE

PRACTICE EXERCISE

There's nothing to be scared of! You're being silly. Let's go for this walk!

They say it's safe to go outside, but you never really know. The news is saying something new every day. The virus could be anywhere, on anything!

I know you're feeling scared, but I know you can be brave and take our 10-minute walk. I saw you do it yesterday!

EMPATHIZE AND ENCOURAGE

PRACTICE EXERCISE

There's nothing to be scared of! You're being silly. Let's go for this walk!

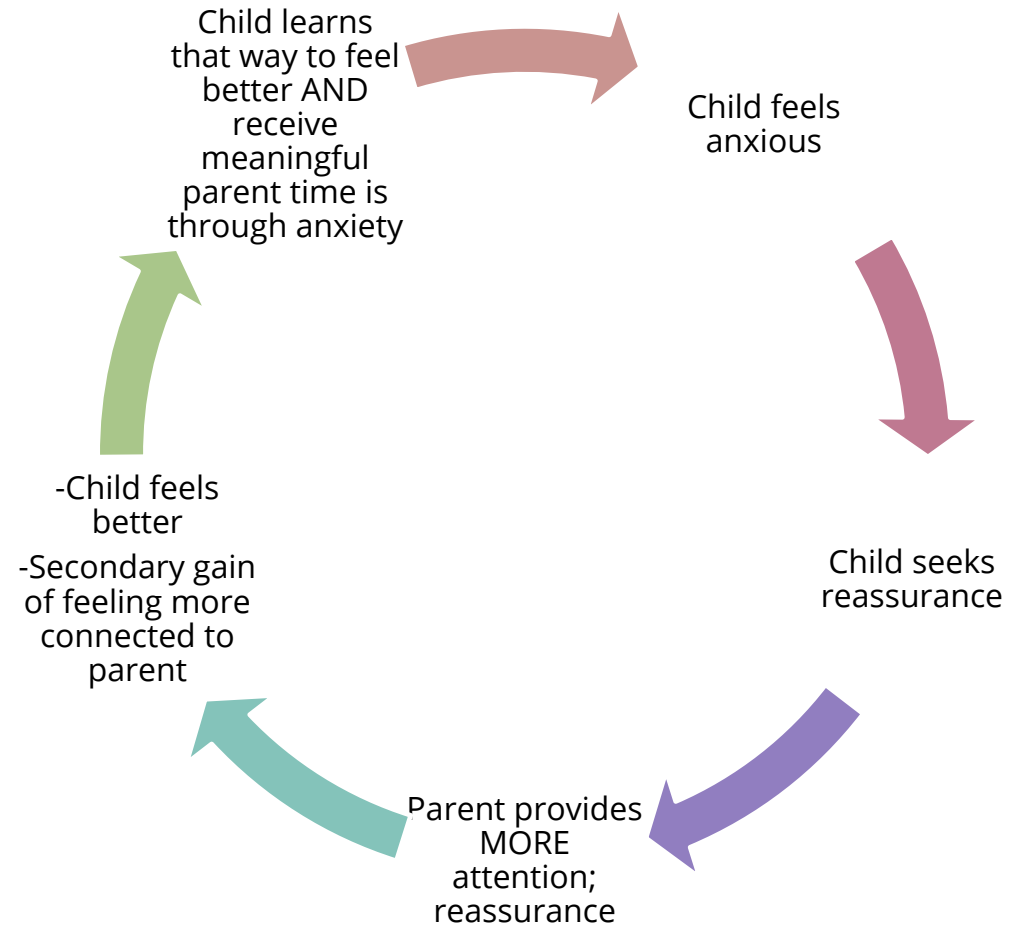
They say it's safe to go outside, but you never really know. The news is saying something new every day. The virus could be anywhere, on anything!

I know you're feeling scared, and I also know that you can be brave and take our 10-minute walk. I saw you do it yesterday!

YOUR ATTENTION: YOUR MOST POWERFUL TOOL

- Parental attention is one of the most effective tools we have in shaping adaptive child behavior
- More attention □ Increase in behavior
- Two skills:
 - Active Ignoring
 - Labeled Praise

THE REASSURANCE CYCLE



ACTIVE IGNORING

Provide Reassurance	Provide facts and reassurance on a topic up to 3 times
Set Limit on Reassurance Seeking	Respond by telling child that you have already answered this question, and encourage them to use their skills/coping strategies
"Active" Ignoring	Redirect your attention; give space for child to use skills to manage feelings on own
Praise!	When child uses adaptive strategies to cope with worry, or move on, immediately praise child's efforts and provide positive attention

LABELED PRAISE

- Rewarding behavior □ increase in behavior
- Goal: “Catch” your child engaging in adaptive behavior
 - Value based activities
 - Cognitive coping strategies
 - Cognitive restructuring strategies
- Praise it!
 - Be specific (i.e., labeled)
 - Be immediate



MODELING



- Engaging in value-based activities
 - Including: self-care
- Using detective thinking; forming balanced thoughts in response to our OWN worries
- Using mindfulness when facing our own worries
- Sticking to a (flexible) routine

IN CONCLUSION...

■ **YOU ARE DOING A GREAT JOB**

- These skills are muscles to be developed, not standards to hold yourself to.
- Every family is different. You can and should be flexible in your adaptation of these strategies to meet your needs.
- This period of social distancing will not last forever – but these skills can!

RESOURCES

- How to talk to kids about the coronavirus
 - [NPR comic for young kids](#)
 - [Boston University tips; Harvard University tips](#)
 - [Tips for teens](#)
- Increasing agency for adults, teens, and kids
 - [How to help our community](#)
 - [Increasing agency: autonomy](#)
- Connecting with values
 - [Teen values worksheet](#)
- Establishing routines
 - [CNN's tips on finding balance in routines](#)
 - [When schedules turn into schedon'ts](#)

Keeping moving!

- [Activities for kids](#)
- [Virtual fitness classess for kids and families](#)
- [Active for Life: 200 activities](#)
- [Free Peloton Family](#)

Homeschooling resources:

- [Happy Numbers \(create a teacher account\)](#)
- [The Home School Mom](#)

Getting creative with fun, educational, and value-based activities for kids

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Suggested Simple Activies for Kids and Teens](#)
- [Shared google doc of free/low cost activities](#)
- [Parade.com - 125 ways to keep kids entertained](#)
- [How one community is managing](#)

- Quick, easy (healthy) meals:
 - [The Pantry Meals Real People Are Cooking Right Now](#)
 - [Quarantine Cooking recipes](#)
 - [Easy Recipes to Cook While You're Self-Quarantined](#)
 - [22 Easy Recipes You Can Make With Pantry Staples](#)
- Understanding the Stimulus Package
 - [Your Guide To The Federal Stimulus Package](#)
 - [NYT's FAQs](#)
- Validation
 - [It's okay not to be okay](#)
- General child mental health support:
 - [Child Mind Institute](#)

Welcome to the Child and Adolescent Treatment and Research Programs

At the Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders at Boston University

***Dear Families** – Child CARD is currently open and providing services virtually, using secure Zoom video and audio conferencing. We are accepting new clients to our waiting list, which is currently multiple months in duration. If you are a parent/caregiver interested in services for your child, please complete our [**intake form**](#).*

If you have any questions, please contact us at
(617) 353-9610
childbu@bu.edu
rmerson@bu.edu
aekeller@bu.edu
hdtmars@bu.edu
<http://sites.bu.edu/childcardresearch/>

