



Northeast and Caribbean (HHS Region 2)

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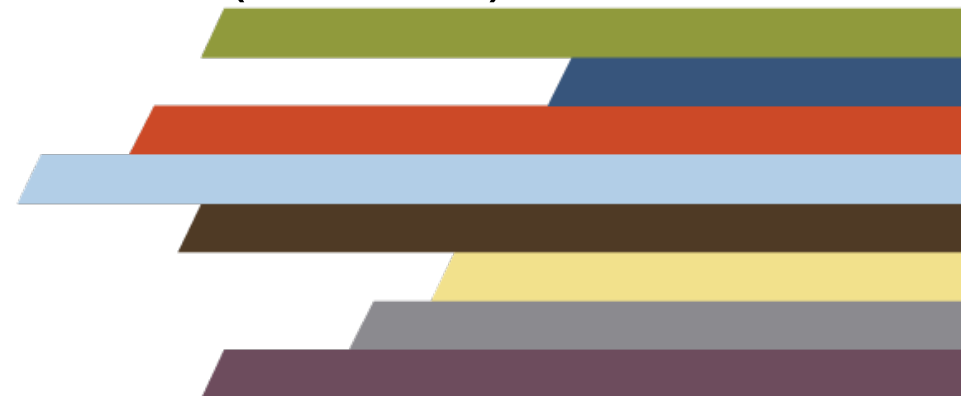
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# Self-Care & Thriving for Educators During a Public Health Crisis

PJ Wenger, LPC, MFT, NCC

Senior Training & Consultation Specialist

Northeast & Caribbean Mental Health  
Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)



# Northeast and Caribbean MHTTC

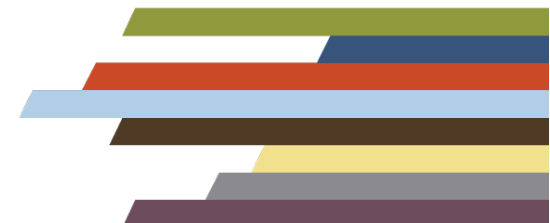
- Provides 5 years (2018 – 2023) of funding to:
  - Enhance capacity of behavioral health workforce to deliver evidence-based and promising practices to individuals with mental illnesses
  - Address full continuum of services spanning mental illness prevention, treatment, and recovery supports
  - Train related workforces (police/first responders, primary care providers, vocational services, etc.) to provide effective services to people with mental illnesses



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# Feedback

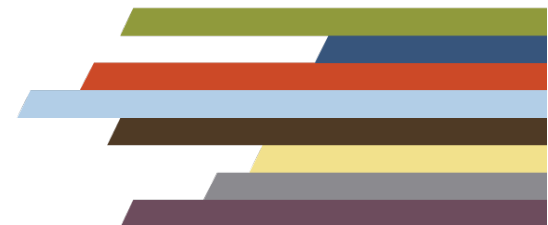
- Our funding comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which requires us to evaluate our services. We appreciate your honest, ANONYMOUS feedback about this event, which will provide information to SAMHSA, AND assist us in planning future meetings and programs. Feedback about this training will assist us in developing trainings that are relevant to your current professional needs. **Therefore, your feedback counts!**



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# Video Recording Information

- Please note that we will be recording this webinar and posting it to our website. Any information and input you provide during today's call will be recorded and posted on our website.

THANKS!

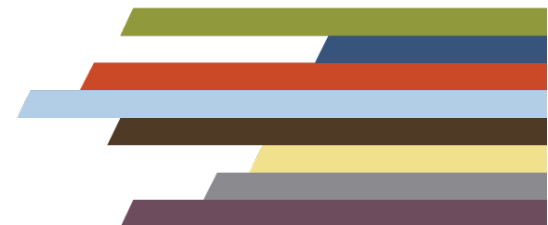


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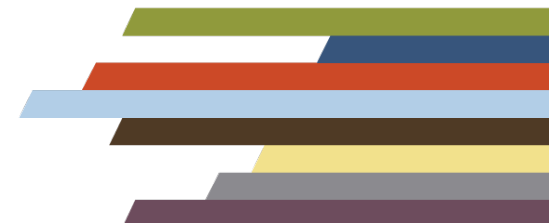
# Your Interactions With Us

- **Question and Answers**

- Q & A will occur at the end of the call.
- Please type your questions in the Q & A feature in Zoom located on the task bar (hover over task bar).

- **Chat and Polls**

- Throughout the webinar, we will be asking for your input.
- Please use the Chat or Poll features in Zoom located on the task bar.



# **PJ Wenger, LPC, MFT, NCC**



PJ Wenger has 28 years of experience in the field of mental health. Among the settings that she has worked in include psychiatric screening, inpatient children's/adult psychiatric unit, in-home counseling, residential treatment, schools and private practice since 2003. In addition PJ is the Lead Trauma Responder for Mercer County as well as a state and national trauma responder having responded to both the 911 events and Hurricane Sandy.

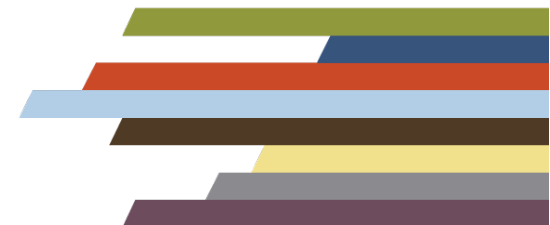
# 3 Minute Meditation



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# Objectives

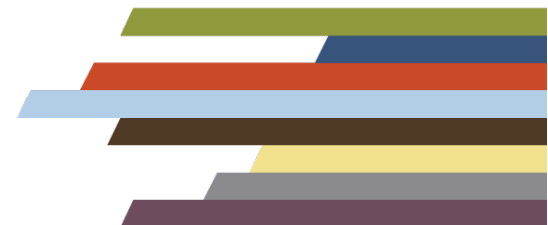
- To acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is having on educators, students, and families
- To be able to identify signs of distress for the educator & students
- To promote and encourage wellness strategies
- To be able to recognize mental health issues in our students
- To identify ways to help our families from a distance



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# The Face of the COVID-19 in Education for Students & Educators

- ❖ Education delivered remotely
- ❖ Struggling with online platforms
- ❖ Availability for students
- ❖ Social distancing
- ❖ Grief around cancelations of rites of passage for students

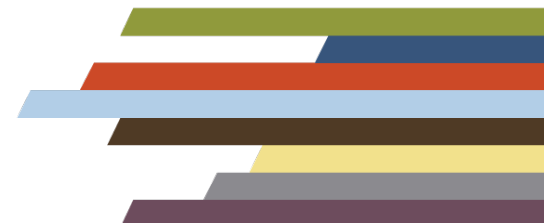


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# Poll The Audience

- What are your biggest challenges during this time?

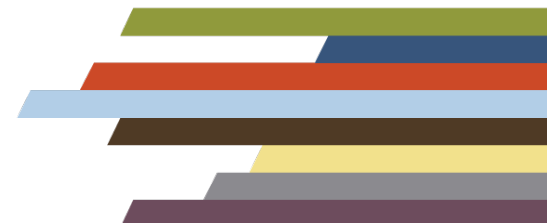
Use the chat box to let me know.



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# Signs of Distress for The Educator

Helplessness  
and hopeless

Hypervigilance

Reduced  
creativity

Minimizing or  
dismissing  
others' concerns

Chronic  
exhaustion &  
fatigue

Inability to Listen

A sense that one  
can never do  
enough

Cynicism and  
anger

Increased  
addictions

Fear or guilt

Inability to  
empathize

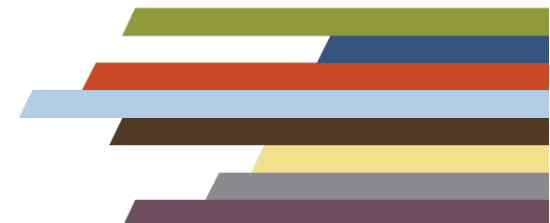
Lipsky, Burk (2009)



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# How This Manifests Itself in Our Lives

Increased  
arguments  
with others

Decreased  
performance in  
your job

Being afraid to take  
time away from  
your daily activities

Increased  
isolation

Increased  
addictive  
behaviors

Thinking the  
worst in every  
situation

Sleep/Appetite  
disturbances

Emotional  
outbursts

Losing patience  
with those  
around us.

Forgetting why you  
do your job

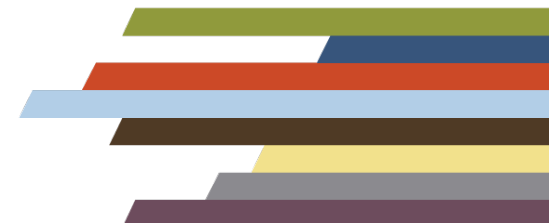
(Lipsky, Burke, 2009)



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# Finding Out How Stressed We Really Are

## Taking a Quick Inventory The Perceived Stress Scale 10 questions Self Administered Self Scored

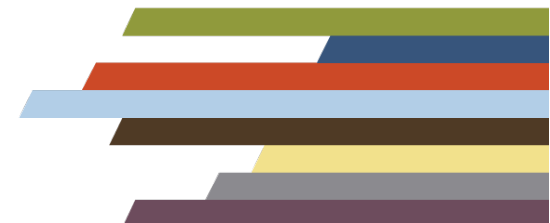
This tool, while originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for helping us understand how different situations affect our feelings and our perceived stress. The questions in this scale ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. (Cohen, 1994)



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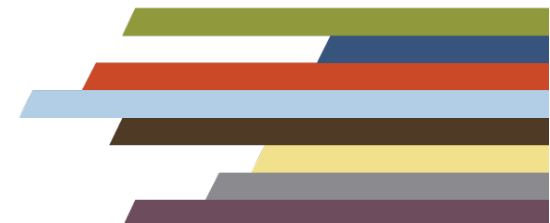


# Perceived Stress Scale

**For each question choose from the following alternatives:**

**0-Never    1-Almost never    2-sometimes    3-fairly often.    4-very often**

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?



# Perceived Stress Scale

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

**0-Never    1-Almost never    2-sometimes    3-fairly often.    4-very often**

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

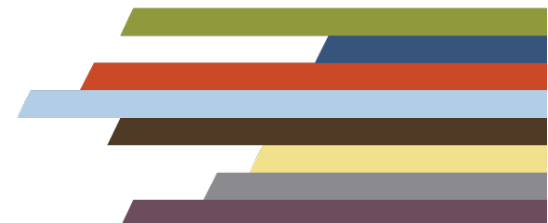
(Cohen, 1994)



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# Perceived Stress Scale Scoring

## Finding your PSS score

You can determine your PSS score by:

First, reverse your scores for questions 4,5,7,& 8.

On these 4 questions, change the scores like this:

0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0

Now add up your scores for each item to get a total.

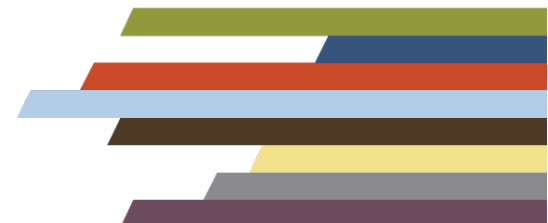
Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0-40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.

Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.

Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.

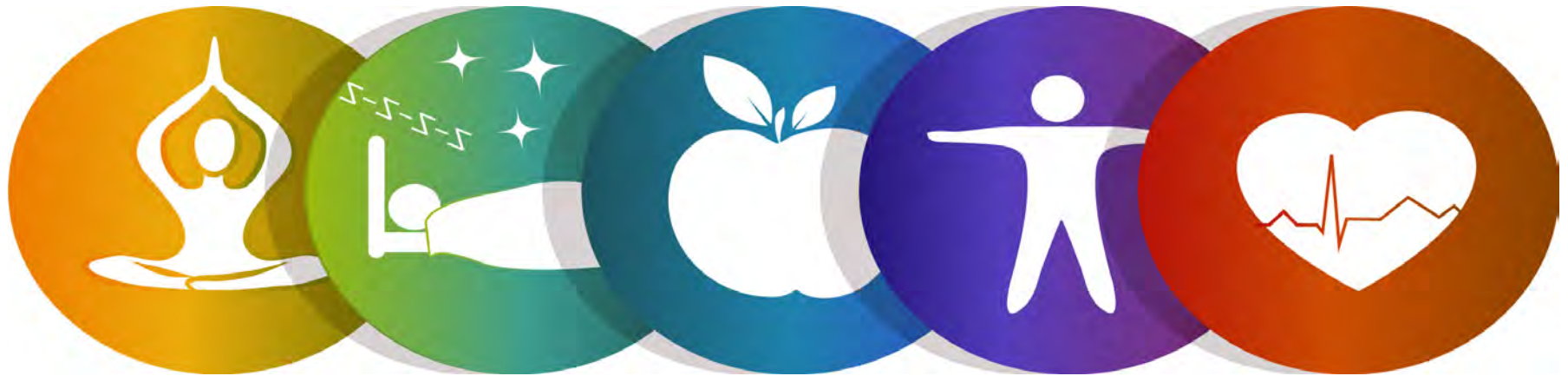
Scores ranging from 27-49 would be considered high perceived stress.

(Cohen, 1994)





# Wellness Strategies



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## The ABC's of Wellness

Awareness

Balance

Connection

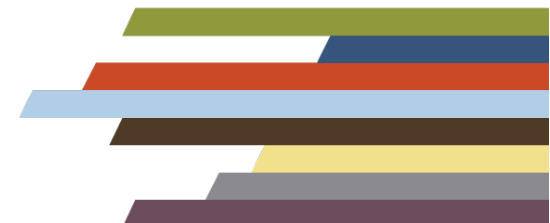
(Pearlman, Caringi, 2009).



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# Awareness

Strategies for us to be more aware of ourselves

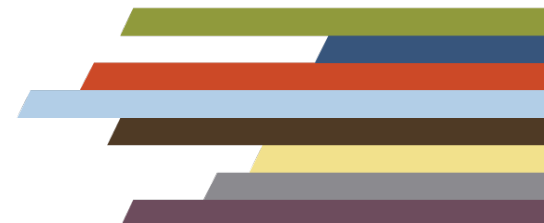
- ❖ Practice mindfulness
- ❖ Keeping a journal
- ❖ Meditation
- ❖ Reading books, watching movies
- ❖ Write down goals, plans and priorities
- ❖ Gratitude practice
- ❖ Perform a daily reflection



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# Balance In Our Lives

- ❖ Engaging in a playful activity
- ❖ Being physical - walking, yoga, Thai chi
- ❖ Staying hydrated
- ❖ Establishing a schedule that includes work, play and rest
- ❖ Avoid information overload from the news and media
- ❖ Read a book, watch a movie, take virtual tours of museums,
- ❖ Check out your local library for free access to audiobooks, movies, and e-books
- ❖ Check out local gyms for online demand classes or utilize an online exercise service

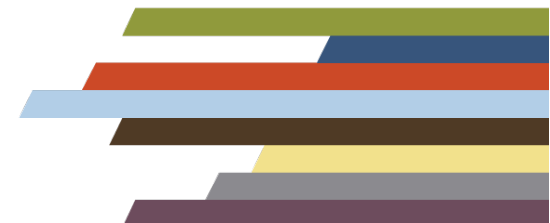


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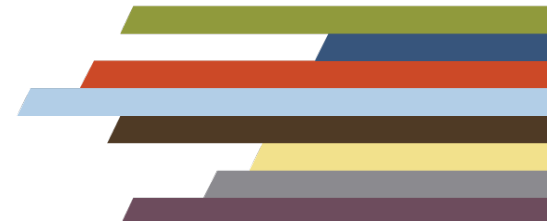
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# Connection

- ❖ Connections with colleagues
- ❖ Connections with friends and family
- ❖ Utilizing ongoing audio, video, email, text and facetime
- ❖ Utilize available apps to have group meetings when needed such as House party, Google Duo app, Marco Polo, Skype,
- ❖ Do group activities online using Netflix Party, MyCircle.tv, Watch2Gether, AndChill, Syncplay, or Kosmi\*

\*Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource is meant to provide an example and does not imply endorsement by the Northeast and Caribbean MHTTC.



# Awareness Resources

Happify

365  
Gratitude

Relax  
Meditation

Track Your  
Happiness

Mood  
Notes

Insight  
Timer

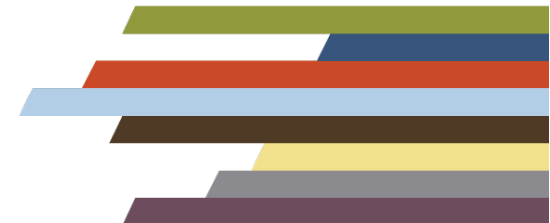
10%  
Happier



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# Balance Resources

Headspace

Calm App

Smiling  
Mind

Provider  
Resilience

Virtual  
Hope Box

5 Minute  
Yoga

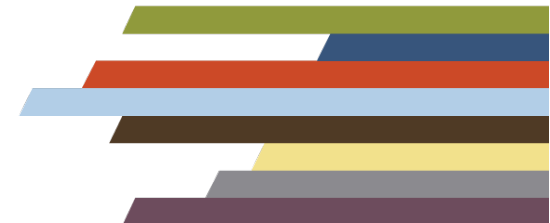
My  
Gratitude  
Journal



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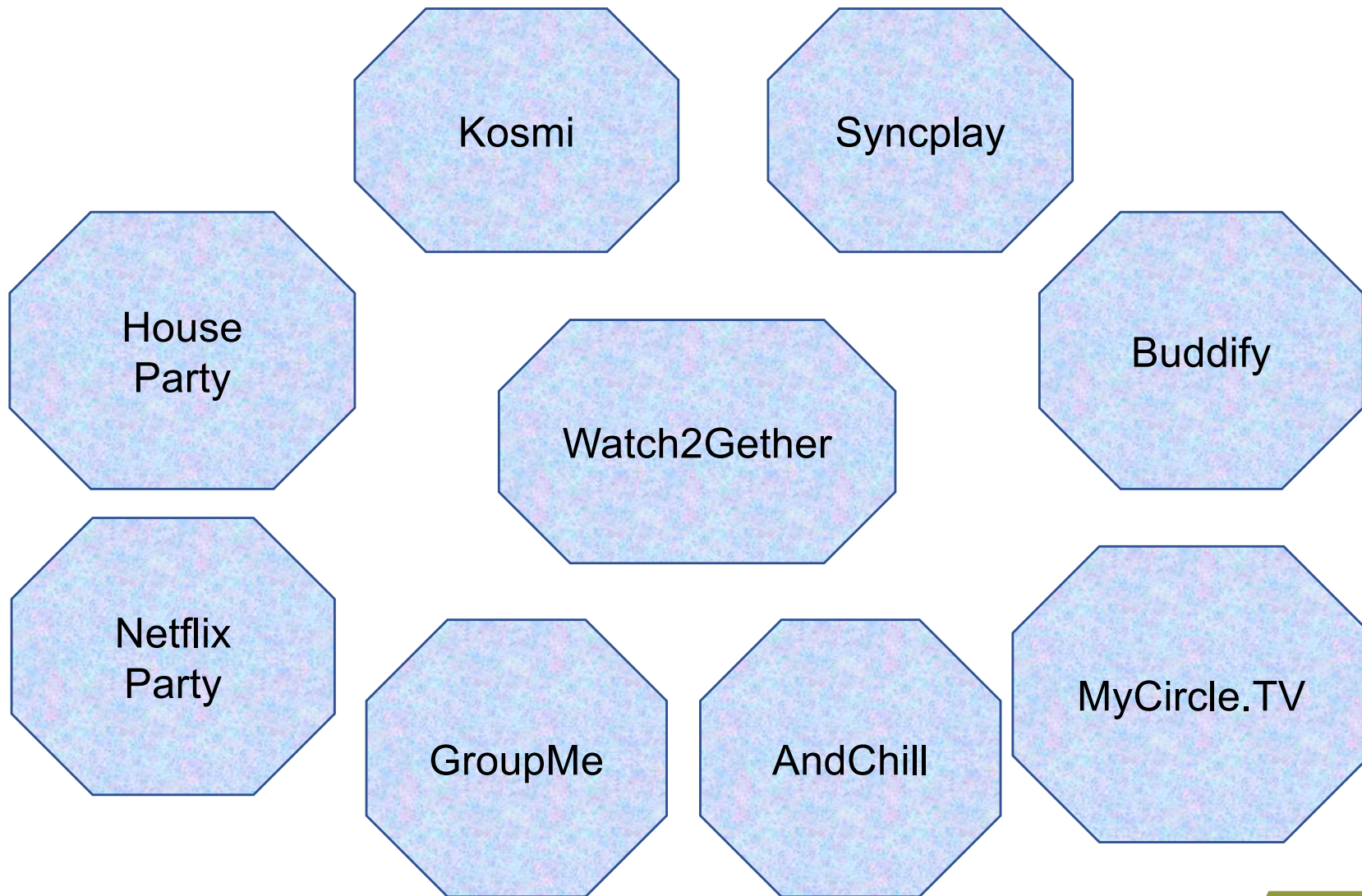
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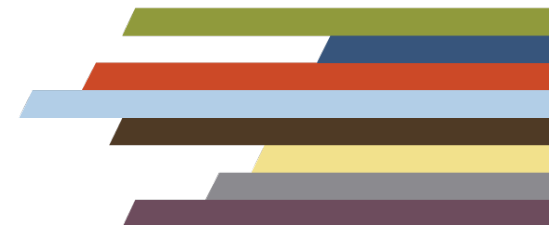
# Connection Resources



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# Additional Stressors for Educators

## Stressor

## Strategies

### BEING ACCESSIBLE

- ✓ Set up office hours and stick to them
- ✓ Make office hours flexible for you and students
- ✓ Have a parent hour

### STRUGGLING WITH TECHNOLOGY

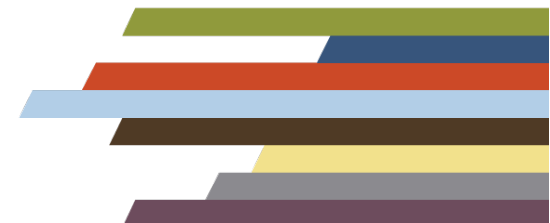
- ✓ Hook up with your technology person
- ✓ Tap into sites online specific for teachers to help with technology
- ✓ Office of Educational Technology  
<https://tech.ed.gov/teachers/>
- ✓ Tech For Teachers
- ✓ Center for Teaching and Learning  
<https://www.Washington.edu/teaching/topics/engaging-students-in-learning/teaching-with-technology>



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# Additional Stressors for Educators

## Stressor

## Strategies

### JUGGLING WORK AND HOME

- ✓ Establish a schedule for you and your children (don't work 24/7)
- ✓ Make sure to include time for work, play, rest and alone time
- ✓ Engage in some time with friends

### DEALING WITH STRESSED STUDENTS AND CHILDREN

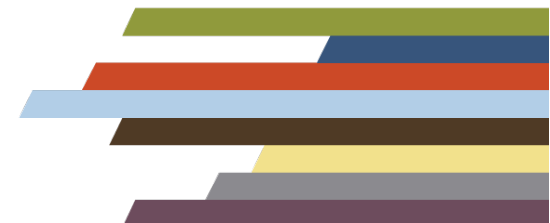
- ✓ Helping students to manage time and be successful
  - ✓ Providing students with links for relaxation and meditation
  - ✓ Walking students through some of those apps - make it an assignment to do together
  - ✓ Get outside
  - ✓ Engage in a new activity
- <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/simple-activities-children-and-adolescents>



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# Additional Stressors for Educators

## Stressor

## Strategies

### FEELING ISOLATED

- ✓ Connect with friends on a regular basis, set up times for chats
- ✓ Adopt a new hobby or craft
- ✓ Journal your experiences
- ✓ Adopt a rescue animal
- ✓ Create futuristic plans

### DEALING WITH YOUR OWN FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY

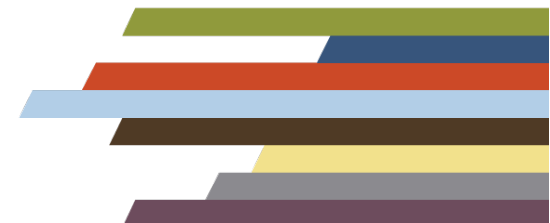
- ✓ Access a mental health hotline
- ✓ Develop a regular yoga or bodywork practice
- ✓ Utilize links for relaxation
- ✓ Get outside
- ✓ Journal
- ✓ Gratitude Practice



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# Additional Stressors for Educators

## Stressor

**GRIEF AROUND  
CANCELLATIONS OF RITES OF  
PASSAGE FOR STUDENTS.**

## Strategies

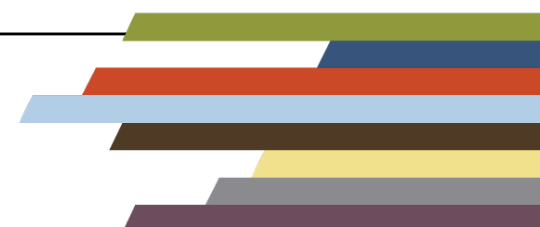
- ✓ Listen to students and allow for them to express how they are feeling
- ✓ Don't try and tell students it will be okay  
Use terminology that puts things in a different frame, e.g., "Things are different now but we can still do....."
- ✓ Have students make a list of the things that they are missing
- ✓ Have students come up with ideas of how they can do some of these things when the social distancing is over
- ✓ Have student come up with all the things that they will do when social distancing is over
- ✓ Offer hope that everyone is missing things and that there will be time for some DO-overs



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# Identifying Mental Health Issues in Our Students

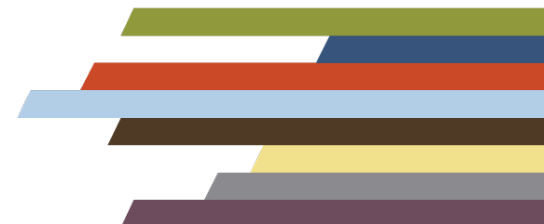
- Carefully listen to the words that students are using in their language to you - they may not necessarily say "I'm anxious" or "I'm depressed"
- When they use alternative language ask them what they mean
- Dispel rumors about the current status of COVID-19. Refer them to reliable sources for information and clarification
  - Center for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov>



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# How To Help From a Distance Addressing the Isolation

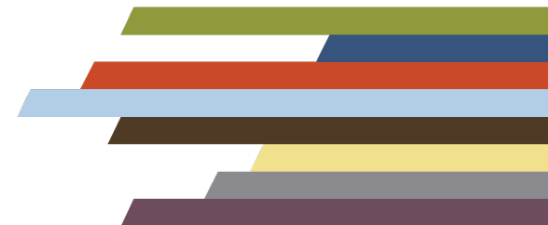
- Identify with students who their supports are and who they can contact
- Provide Students with Helplines/Hotlines for their use
- When doing virtual classrooms allow the students to have 10-15 minutes before the lesson or after to socialize
- Create a social hour in which you sit in to ascertain how students are doing - during this time avoid talk of school work but focus on feelings and experiences
- Create a check-in or a buddy system among groups of students
- Create activities for students that promote hope
- Have students write a letter to their future selves



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# Helplines/Hotlines

- TLC4TEENS

- TheTREVORProject

- [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

- 1-800-273-8255
  - [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

- Crisis Text Line

- Text 741741

- Safe Place

- 1-888-290-7233
  - <https://www.nationalsafeplace.org>

- NAMI

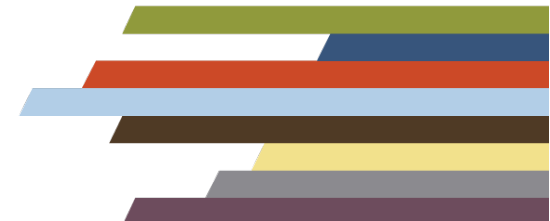
- 1-800-950-6264
  - <https://www.nami.org>



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# Helping Families From A Distance

## Signs of Distress in Parents

- ✓ Multiple emails to you
- ✓ Losing patience with you
- ✓ Reports from their children that they are losing patience with the amount of schoolwork or the virtual platform
- ✓ Increased frustration with virtual school demands
- ✓ Inability for parents to get students to complete work
- ✓ Parents having difficulty organizing the work for their children or not understanding tasks

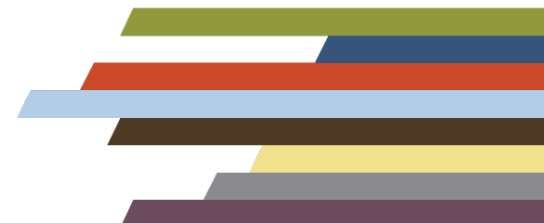


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# How to Help Parents

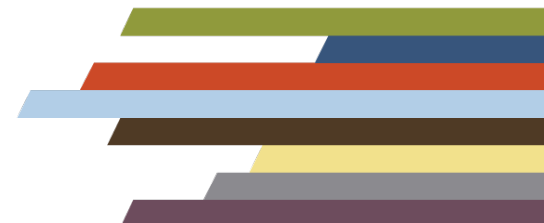
- ❖ Assure parents that we are all in this together and that we will figure things out
- ❖ Be patient with parents who are having challenges with the technology or who do not have access to technology
- ❖ Offer them online video for parenting during this time with experts  
<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>
- ❖ Provide them with websites to help their children learn
  - ❖ Kahn Academy, CourseHero, Idroo Basic, Mometrix Academy, SmartTutor, TutorsClass)
- ❖ Think about having a parent forum 1 day a week during the evening when they can have a conversation with you
- ❖ Be flexible when talking to parents



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# New Activities To Do With Kids

## Supporting Students to Do New Things

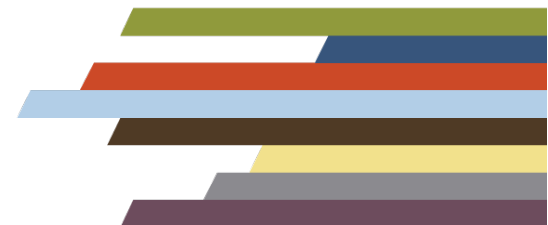
- ✓ Make a challenge to find a new hobby that creates a product (knitting, Pinterest ideas)
- ✓ Have students create online photo albums
- ✓ Have children create Pandemic First Aid Kits
- ✓ Encourage children to find a pen pal  
<http://www.penpalworld.com>
- ✓ Have children do a bucket list for after COVID-19



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# Next Steps

- What is **one** thing you can do in the next week to help yourself, your parents or your students?

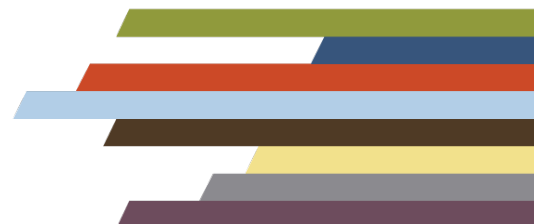
Use the chat box to share something you can do to support wellness.



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THANK YOU!

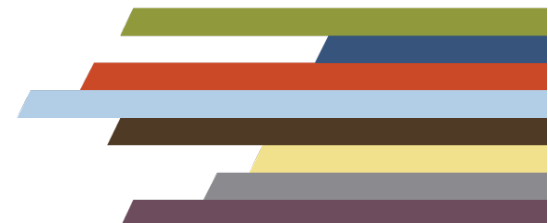
[pj.wenger@rutgers.edu](mailto:pj.wenger@rutgers.edu)



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**NEVER LOSE HOPE**

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# References

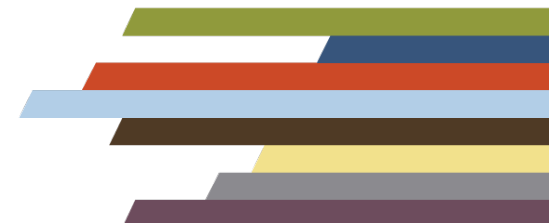
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