

Building Resiliency in Times of Uncertainty and Unrest

January 2021

During this incredibly challenging time for our country, North Marin Community Services recognizes that our own resiliency is being called upon. There have been many traumatic experiences such as wildfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the social and political unrest, including the violence that occurred on January 6, 2021 at the U.S. Capitol. You may be feeling overwhelmed in managing emotions and wondering how to talk to and support your children and family. While feelings of anxiety and uncertainty are completely normal during times like this, it is important to remember that we all have the capacity to bring ourselves into balance, even under prolonged, constant stress.



Things you can do to support yourself and your family:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Exercise regularly like walking, hiking or dancing.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to relax. Try to do some other activities you enjoy like gardening, art or listening to music.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Spend time as a family. Commit to family mealtimes, play board games, take walks together (explore Marin County Parks <https://www.marincountyparks.org/discoverlearn/events-calendar>) and engage in creative activities (For ideas, sign up for the First 5 Marin newsletter at Michelle@First5Marin.org).

Strategies for talking to your children

Children under 7 years of age:

- Limit their exposure to the news
- For big news stories, ask: "What have you heard and how are you feeling?"
- Encourage kids to process the story through play and art
- "Look for the helpers" such as Sesame Street's In Communities resources <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences/>
- Give kids facts and context
- When they ask why something happened, avoid labels like "bad guys."
- Set your URLs to open to non-news-based portals
- Model calmness

Children 8-12 years of age:

- For big stories, ask: "What have you heard and how are you feeling?"
- Take positive action together
- Be available for questions and conversation
- Talk about -- and filter -- news coverage
- Set your URLs to open to non-news-based portals
- Model calmness
- Help children express their feelings

Teens:

- Check in with your child. Ask: "What have you heard and how are you feeling?"
- Talk about -- and filter -- news coverage
- Let teens express themselves
- Model calmness
- Consider referring to the Novato Teen Clinic so your teen can talk confidentially to a professional mental health provider. Call or text (415) 985-5012.

However, the emotional fatigue associated with isolation, exacerbated by the distress and fears we may be experiencing, can impair our ability to work or do well in school. It can affect our moods, behaviors, and our sense of connectedness to family and friends. This can be further intensified by economic uncertainty, grief over the loss of loved ones, and history of traumatic experiences. And for the one in five who already have mental health conditions – or the one in two who are at risk of developing them – it is critical to get professional help as early as possible. If you find that you or a loved one are so impacted by emotional distress that it is interfering with work, school, relationships or ability to engage in the self-care ideas described here, please reach out for professional help.

Here are some options we recommend:

- Talk to your primary care provider.
- Call North Marin Community Services to learn more about our Mental Health program (415) 892-1643 x239. For all programs, visit <https://www.northmarincs.org/> or email info@northmarincs.org for questions.
- Call the County of Marin Behavioral Health and Recovery Services ACCESS Team (888) 818-1115 for an assessment or referral if you have MediCal.
- If you or a loved one are in a crisis, call 911 or the Crisis Stabilization Unit (415) 473-6666.
- If you are having suicidal thoughts or are concerned about someone else who may be suicidal, please call the Marin County Suicide Hotline (415) 499-1100.
- The California Warm Line is a non-emergency warm line for anyone in California seeking mental or emotional support (855) 845-7415 <https://www.mentalhealthsf.org/peer-run-warmline/>

The North Marin Community Services family wants you to know that we stand with you. As psychiatrist Dr. Janet Taylor states, "We can be together in suffering but also through healing." Now is the time to remind our children and our loved ones of ways to be safe, to talk with one another and to reach out when needed. We will get through this ~ together.

Online resources:

Good Morning America Clip

<https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/News/amid-covid-19-politics-us-capitol-breach-cope/story?id=64779914>

Help for Managing your Stress

<https://covid19.ca.gov/manage-stress-for-health/>

Scared Kids | How to Deal with Fear | Getting Over Fear | Child Mind Institute

What parents can do to aid kids in processing grief and fear in a healthy way. Helping children cope with frightening news.

<https://childmind.org/article/helping-children-cope-frightening-news/>

What to Say to Kids When the News is Scary

https://www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716704917/when-the-news-is-scary-what-to-say-to-kids?utm_source=npr_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20210107&utm_term=5087446&utm_campaign=the-new-normal&utm_id=17956623&orgid=151

Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/violence-in-the-media/how-much-scary-stuff-can-my-young-kid-handle>

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids>

**On behalf of the NMCS family, be well and stay safe,
*Management Team***