



Building Coping Skills & Resilience



As GCPS students, families, and staff transition into semester two, here are some practical tips to cope with stress and promote resilience.



Relationships

Positive relationships help us to feel valued, supported and protected from stressors. We can nurture these by taking time to connect with family and friends, being present/attentive to others, allowing ourselves to be listened to, and recognizing and responding to unsupportive relationships.



Routines

Routines help us to organize our days in such a way that taking care of tasks and ourselves become a pattern. They provide comfort when things become unpredictable and are an important part of self-care. Interested in creating a new sleeping, eating, exercising or relaxation routine? It takes an average of 66 days for a behavior to become a habit. So, start small and reward yourself for small victories!



Relaxation

Check in with yourself or with your child. Are you feeling any tension or anxiety? Try to build purposeful, planned relaxation times throughout the day. Whether its five minutes or an hour, taking time to relax can reduce these symptoms. Relaxation activities are unique to every individual. Consider going on a walk, cooking a favorite meal, practicing mindfulness, or spending time with a pet.



Rest

The “R” of REST speaks to your physical energy level. When was the last time you actually got 8 hours of sleep? National Sleep Foundation guidelines advise that healthy adults get between 7-9 hours of sleep per night. When assessing the need for rest or sleep, you might ask yourself how you are feeling physically or energetically. If you notice you are feeling tired, dull, or depleted, you might consider getting a few more hours of sleep regularly. You can even start small, add 15 minutes to your current sleep schedule and see how you feel!



Replenish

Consider your physical and social-emotional wellness. Consider if you're hydrated and eating a well-balanced diet. Consider the news and media you or your student consume each day. We are all affected by the social media and the world around us. Assess if you or your student may benefit from taking a break from media platforms or starting subtle changes like reading before bed or taking a walk to break up asynchronous learning time. Small changes can make a big impact on productivity and our body's replenishment.



Release

The “R” of RELEASE speaks to our need to purposefully off-load or process energy that is no longer serving us by holding it in. Release of toxic stress can come in many forms. Physical release through exercise is a primary way to shed excess energy, anxiety, and stress. Depending on your physical capacities and preferences, this can be anything from walking or running to dance or chair yoga. Alternatively, many people find meaningful release through creative expression, such as art, crafting, music, singing, or poetry. Still others find that journaling or talking with trusted people can be effective methods of release.



Local Resources

1. The COPE (Community Outreach for Psychiatric Emergencies) line is a 24 hours a day telephone hotline, warm line and information and referral service staffed by trained personnel. The Hotline can be reached by dialing 1-800-542-2673 or 804-693-COPE.
2. Your local school counselors and school psychologists are available to support students and school families. Contact your local school and ask to speak with a school counselor or school psychologist.

Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators

If you or someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately via 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or the Crisis Text Line (text “HOME” to 741741).

Suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs. Do not be afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts. Never take warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret.

Risk Factors



- Hopelessness
- Non-suicidal self injury (e.g., cutting)
- Mental illness, especially severe depression, but also post traumatic stress, ADHD, and substance abuse
- History of suicidal thinking and behavior
- Prior suicide among peers or family members
- Interpersonal conflict, family stress/dysfunction
- Presence of a firearm in the home

Warning Signs



- Suicidal threats in the form of direct (e.g., “I want to die”) and indirect (e.g. “I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up”) statements
- Suicide notes, plans, online postings
- Making final arrangements
- Preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about death
- Sudden unexplained happiness
- Increased risk taking
- Heavy drug/alcohol use

What to Do



- Remain calm, nonjudgmental and listen.
- Ask directly about suicide (e.g., “Are you thinking about suicide”).
- Focus on your concern for their well-being
- Avoid being accusatory (e.g., don’t say, “You aren’t going to do anything stupid are you?”).
- Reassure them that there is help; they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm, especially firearms.
- **Get help!** Never agree to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Tell an appropriate caregiving adult. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional.

Reminders for Parents



After a school notifies a parent of their child's risk for suicide and provides referral information, parents must:

- **Continue to take threats seriously.** Follow through is important even after the child calms down or informs the parent “they didn't mean it.”
- **Access school supports.** If parents are uncomfortable with following through on referrals, they can give the school psychologist permission to contact the referral agency, provide referral information, and follow up on the visit.
- **Maintain communication with school.** After an intervention, the school will also provide follow-up supports. Your communication will be crucial to ensuring that the school is the safest, most comfortable place possible for your child.