

Name:

Date:

Social Emotional Learning Remote Learning Activities

Mental Health Foundations

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding Mental Health Foundations
- Understanding Risks and Protective Factors, including Digital Addiction.

Materials Needed:

- Pen or pencil
- Paper

Please refer to Appendix A for all glossary terms and definitions.

1. How has the Coronavirus outbreak and social distancing affected your mood, behavior, and mental wellness? What role do you feel that social distancing and isolation has played into this? Take a moment to reflect on your mental wellness and see if there have been any changes prior to school being cancelled.

2. **Action Item:** Take time either read the article found in Appendix B, or watch [this video](#).
3. After reading the article, or watching the video, consider how your digital use and addiction has changed due to isolation and schools being cancelled. Have you been

Appendix A

Glossary

Lesson Glossary

-Mental Wellness: A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

-Isolation: The state of being in a place or situation that is separate from others.

-Digital Addiction: An uncontrollable urge to use technological devices such as computers, smartphones, and gaming systems.

Appendix B

Articles for Lessons

Lesson Articles

Lesson 1, #2 Article:

Article from

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, there is help. If you feel like you want to harm yourself or others, it's important to reach out and talk to someone as soon as possible. Here are some free resources:

- Teenline 800-TLC-TEEN
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741 in the US (686868 in Canada)
- 911

It is completely expected and natural to feel stress during an infectious disease outbreak. Stress during this time can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health or safety and the health and safety of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Increased irritability or a worsening mood that may make it hard to get along with others
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA external icon](#)) website.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Things you can do to support yourself-

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
- external icon.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- external icon
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

Reduce stress in yourself and others

More support for COVID-19-

- Reducing Stigma
- Stop the Spread of Rumors

Sharing the facts about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful..

When you share accurate information about COVID-19 you can help make people feel less stressed and allow you to connect with them.

Learn more about [taking care of your emotional health.](#)

For parents-

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include-

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many things you can do to support your child-

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Learn more about [helping children cope.](#)

For responders-

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

- Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.

Learn more [tips for taking care of yourself](#) during emergency response.

For people who have been released from quarantine

Being separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be stressful, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine. Some feelings include :

- Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine
- Other emotional or mental health changes

Lesson 1 Articles

Lesson 1, #4 Article:

Article from

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/20/well/family/is-digital-addiction-a-real-threat-to-kids.html>

Is 'Digital Addiction' a Real Threat to Kids?

Think of screens as something to handle in moderation, like food, rather than something without any healthy place in our lives, like heroin, experts say.

As we worriedly watch our children navigate the ever-changing digital landscape, there's a great deal of talk these days about "digital addiction." But several experts say we should teach kids to think of screens as something to handle in moderation, like food, rather than something without any healthy place in our lives, like meth or heroin.

Children's use of devices ranges along a continuum from healthy to compulsive to addictive, said Dr. Dimitri A. Christakis, the director of the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at Seattle Children's Research Institute and professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington. "I think the phenomenon of tech addiction is quite real," he said.

In a [commentary](#) published last week in JAMA, Dr. Christakis suggested that the relationship between media exposure and health in adolescents might turn out to follow an "inverted U" pattern, that is, that very high exposure and very low exposure might both be associated with poorer mental health outcomes than moderate amounts of usage.

Technology use is not analogous to drug use, because these devices serve important purposes in children's lives and adolescents' lives — indeed, in all our lives. Since most of us depend on technology to do our jobs and stay connected, we — and our children — need to find healthy ways to use it, sometimes quite intensely, without letting it take over.

Dr. Ellen Selkie, an assistant professor of adolescent medicine at the University of Michigan, who does research on adolescents' use of social media, said, "It's like food, it's something we all need because of the way businesses run, because of the job market — and for teens it's the way they socialize."

With younger children, she said, there is evidence supporting limitations on the absolute amount of screen time; with older children, the situation is more complicated. "The question is, with a teen who always seems to be on their phone, is that addiction or is that where their friends are? And normal teen behavior is always to want to be talking to their friends instead of their family."

Just as there are healthy and unhealthy ways to eat, there are daily decisions about the use of technology that add up to major health choices. "What gives me pause about the discussion of digital addiction is it doesn't always take into account the meaningful things that happen with digital technology that cause kids to do it," Dr. Selkie said.

Paradoxically, she said that there are times when a child's avoidance of screen time may also be cause for concern. A child who seems more depressed or more isolated may need help, she said, and some children may manifest that depression by not wanting to look at their phones.

Dr. Jenny Radesky, an assistant professor of developmental behavioral pediatrics at the University of Michigan and [an expert on technology use by children](#), compared technology to "an environment," as the place where all kinds of activities take place, from work to entertainment to social life. But it is a deliberately designed and engineered environment, she said, and designed with a goal of making money.

Dr. Radesky said that she prefers not to use the term "addiction" in her research or clinical work, which is mainly with younger children, but that she understands why the word is invoked. Thinking in terms of addiction, she said in an email, helps people understand "the design of modern technologies is purposefully habit-forming and programmed with the sort of variable rewards that keep humans engaged."

But at the same time, she said, "the main problem I see with calling problematic technology use a clinical 'addiction' is that it locates the illness or problem within the individual, rather than the digital environment that is shaping the individual's behavior, often through methods that are intentionally exploitative or subconscious."

Kids need to understand these methods that are being used to fix their attention, Dr. Radesky said, and there is a tremendous teaching opportunity in helping them understand the way the technology works — and works on them.

Children in middle school and even as young as 8 or 9 are hungry for this information, she said: "When your child sees something creepy, weird or persuasive, or won't answer when you've

called their name five million times, talk about it with them, demystify why it's happening (and if you don't know, try to look it up), and make them more digitally literate."

And as children grow into adolescents, thinking about healthy – and unhealthy – internet behavior requires nuanced and highly specific understanding by researchers; it's not just about the total amount of screen time.

In Dr. Christakis's commentary, he contrasted the difficulty that researchers experience in trying to understand and quantify children's use of devices, asking, "How can parents of a middle schooler possibly reliably recount their child's use of recreational screen time given that many children and adolescents carry a device in their pocket at all times and use it to communicate, play games and do homework? How could teenagers estimate their screen time given the hundreds of times they check their phone during the day even for a few seconds, never mind informing scientists of what precisely they looked at?"

And yet, he pointed out, that kind of information is routinely – and efficiently – collected by the industry and used to increase the appeal of the devices and the programs. "While those of us in academia and research are struggling to get the data we need to put together coherent and robust guidelines for parents and policymakers, industry is mining this data," he said. In his commentary, he suggested that increased cooperation between industry and researchers might help establish those guidelines. Dr. Selkie also said that there are ways for tech companies – and even game designers – to be more thoughtful and to incorporate what is being learned about problematic internet use so as to diminish it rather than encourage it.

[\[Read more about minimizing phone use.\]](#) | [\[Read more about helping teens limit phone use.\]](#)

In the meantime, parents are navigating a difficult set of parameters. [Common Sense Media offers a wealth of advice](#) that can help with setting guidelines. One place to start is to require that phones be put down for dinner or on family excursions, and parents, of course, need to [think carefully about their own use of devices](#) and the examples that they are setting.

Beyond that, parents need to keep thinking about digital dangers like cyber bullying, but also worrying when the part of a teenager's life that is lived on line is getting in the way of the other parts. "If a kid is not getting enough sleep, or not getting homework done," Dr. Selkie said, or if there are fights over the phone every night, [parents may need to set limits](#) – or help a teenager set limits.