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## *A COVID-19 Response to Youth in Crisis*

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During a crisis, it is important to reach out to children/adolescents. Crises can be traumatic for children/adolescents and can leave invisible imprints on their brain, mind, body and emotions. It is important during a crisis not to take a sad, shock, traumatic approach, but a **strength-based, resilient approach**.



### **Strength Based Approach:**

1. What's working in your life now?
2. What's not working?
3. How have you coped in the past?
4. Who can you turn to in times of crisis?

### **Who/What is Your Source of Strength?**

- **Family** – biological and those gained (neighbors, church, family friends)
- **Supporters** – friends, peers, mentors, coaches, educators, etc.
- **Thankfulness** – ask the child/adolescent to write a thankfulness journal
- **Generosity** – caring for others gives children a sense of purpose, belonging, and something bigger than themselves
- **Spirituality** – what lifts your spirit? What causes your spirit to soar? Family or Faith traditions? Prayer, Meditation, Sacred Songs or Texts.
- **Hope** – help children see their way out, through, and over
- **Resilience** – use a rubber band/elastic band to help the child/adolescent understand that sometimes like a rubber band you get stressed or stretched, but you can bounce back
- **Medical/Mental Health Access** - access to medical/mental health serves as a protective factor

## Mental Health Interventions for Youth in Crisis during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

**Balloon Release** – ask the child/adolescent to blow up balloons to explain that blowing up a balloon is like having a place to put your emotions/what you feel.

**Mindfulness Exercise** - the child/adolescent to close his/her eyes and think about a place that when he/she thinks about it, he/she feels safe, secure, calm, and peaceful. Ask the following questions:

1. What are you seeing?
2. What are you smelling?
3. What are you hearing?
4. Who are you seeing?
5. What are you feeling?

**Cool Brain vs. Hot Brain** - Using two brains (or have them draw two brains), explain that a brain that is hot (colored red) represents negative thought patterns such as fear, worry, anxiety, and depression. A cool brain (colored blue), represents positive healthy thought patterns such as peace, calm, joy, happiness, laughter, and safety. When you think positive thoughts those are “cool” thoughts.

**Crumpled Paper Exercise** - When feeling anxious, have child/adolescent crumple paper and imagine that all his/her anxiety or problems are in the crumpled paper. Then as he/she feels a sense of release, he/she lets go of those anxieties or problems.

### **CSR Mental Health Support Activity -**

- **Celebrate** - ask the child/adolescent to share 1 or 2 things that he/she would like to celebrate (food, family, friends, video games, etc.).
- **Struggle** - ask the child/adolescent to share something that he/she is struggling with or needs support/prayer for.
- **Resilience/Rubber Band** - ask the child/adolescent to tell you something that he/she overcame.

**The Importance of Play with Children/Adolescents** – Play changes the brain and focus. The pre-frontal cortex regulates thinking, feeling, mood, behaviors, and empathy. Play help the pre-frontal cortex work faster.

### **For Older Children/Adolescents:**

**Empty Chair Exercise** – Ask the child/adolescent to sit in front of an empty chair and imagine himself/herself 10 years from their current age. Ask the child/adolescent the following:

1. What would the current you (current age) say to the future you (10 years from now)?
2. What would the older you (10 years from now say to the current you (current age)?

## Phone Numbers:

### 2-1-1

Provides free and confidential information and referral for mental health services, help with food, housing, employment, counseling, and more.

### 988

Suicide Prevention Lifeline

### 1-800-4ACHILD; 1-800-422-4453

Child-Help USA; Crisis line assists both child and adult survivors of abuse, including sexual abuse; also provides treatment referrals.

### Text HOME to 741741

**Crisis Text Line**; Free, 24/7 support and information for anyone in any type of crisis.

### 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

National Alliance on Mental Illness Help Line

### 770-408-0625

NAMI Georgia Help Line

### 1-800-273-8255

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



## Mental Health Resources:

### WEBSITES:

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)** - [aacap.org](http://aacap.org)

**American Association of Christian Counselors** - [www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net)

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)** - [afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** - <https://www.cdc.gov/>

**FINDINGbalance® Inc.** - [findingbalance.com](http://findingbalance.com)

**Kay Warren: Mental Health** - [kaywarren.com/mentalhealth](http://kaywarren.com/mentalhealth)

**Know the Signs** - [suicideispreventable.org](http://suicideispreventable.org)

**Mental Health America** - [mentalhealthamerica.net](http://mentalhealthamerica.net)

**MentalHealth.gov** - [mentalhealth.gov](http://mentalhealth.gov)

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** - [nami.org](http://nami.org)

**National Institution of Mental Health (NIMH)** - [nimh.nih.gov](http://nimh.nih.gov)

**Stop Bullying** - <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** - [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

**Time to Change** - <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>