



Coping in the 2020/21 School Year

A resource guide for students and young adults

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) developed this behavioral health resource guide for middle and high school students, adolescents and young adults coping during the 2020/21 school year.

We hope that this guide will help spotlight issues and find resources so that Maryland students and young adults can know how to help themselves, and each other, manage stress and recognize signs of crisis during the pandemic.

Please use and share these resources on mental health, substance use, suicide prevention, and grief and loss with your peers.

Mental Health

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The emotional impact of an emergency — like the pandemic and its continued impact — can depend on your experiences, social and economic circumstances, and your support system. Feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness and uncertainty are normal. Some people may hide their feelings. Here are signs to look out for in yourself and in your friends:

- Some people may develop nightmares or have panic attacks
- Some people become irritable, angry, or even start fights with others
- Some may use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs to escape from what is going on
- Sometimes sleeping and eating may become disrupted
- Some people become more isolated and withdrawn

Practice selfcare:

- Limit your screen time. Limit your time watching, reading or listening to news stories. Avoid scrolling through your friends' social media posts about the pandemic and other stressful topics.
- Keep yourself grounded. Exercise, meditate, safely get to a park or other natural setting. Draw, write in a journal, or use music to express your thoughts and feelings. Do things that make you feel good and are also good for you — including getting enough sleep.
- Prioritize sleep. Stick to a schedule to get enough sleep and be mindful of sleep problems, like difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping too much.
- Plan the things you *can* do: wear your mask, wash your hands, social distance, carry wet wipes or other items when you are in public. Recognize the things you can control, like having good hygiene.
- Reach out to your friends and family. If you can, talk about how you are feeling. Talk about anything positive — laugh, joke, connect.
- Let someone know if you are not able to do your usual activities because of worrying.

Recognizing a crisis:

A crisis is generally considered to be a situation in which a person's behaviors — accidentally or on purpose — leads them to hurt themselves or others, or potentially renders them unable to care for themselves or function in everyday activities.

There are many reasons to seek help. Maybe you frequently feel nervous or depressed, have mood swings, or you are drinking too much alcohol. The threshold for reaching out, and getting checked out, should be low. It is better to be safe than sorry. If stress, anxiety, and depression interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row, talk to someone you trust.

One option is to call Maryland's Crisis Helpline:

- Call 211, and press 1
- Visit pressone.211md.org
- Text your zip code to 898-211 (TXT-211)
- [Chat confidentially](#) about local services and programs

If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others, definitely seek immediate help by calling 911.

Mental Health and Crisis Resources:

CDC's Coping with stress

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/copingwith-stresstips.html>

JED Foundation's COVID-19 and managing mental health

<https://www.jedfoundation.org/covid-19-and-managing-mental-health>

Substance Use

Some people may increase their use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs to escape from what is going on. It's natural to seek ways to escape. However, depending on substances to self-medicate will cause more problems than it will solve.

BHA's [Recovery and Wellness Support Resources for the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) offers many local resources, including many virtual support options.

Suicide Prevention

The various effects of the pandemic — including social isolation, uncertainty, unemployment, difficulty accessing care, loss of life, loss of norms and celebrations, and financial difficulties — have contributed to and exacerbated mental distress, which can contribute to thoughts of suicide. The following may be signs that someone is thinking about suicide:

- Mood changes (sadness, anxiety, anger)
- Increases in substance use
- Searching for lethal means such as guns
- Giving away possessions
- Talking about feeling hopeless or purposeless
- Talking about dying or wanting to suicide
- Isolating from others
- Changes in sleep
- Saying goodbye to friends and loved ones

- Young people who are questioning their sexual or gender identities may be at greater risk

Suicide Prevention Resources:

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If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others, definitely seek immediate help by calling 911.

Jed Foundation: text START to 741-741

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) connects you with a 24 hour crisis center.

[SAMHSA's Treatment Locator](#) at 1-800-662-4357 provides you with information about local mental health services.

Grief and Loss

Grief is the natural reaction to loss. Grief is both a universal and a personal experience. Loss can include the death of a loved one, the ending of an important relationship, job loss, loss through theft, or the loss of independence through disability. Everyone has a different reaction to loss, but here are some common signs of grief:

- Changes in sleep patterns or appetite
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Low self-esteem or self-destructive thoughts

If changes in mood and behavior begin to interfere with completion of daily activities, you should reach out to a health professional for support.

For guidance on recognizing grief in children, and for grief resources — including resources targeting specific types of loss — please visit the BHA webpage:

<https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Grief-and-Loss-Resources.aspx>

More Resources

The pandemic may have consequences we are still trying to understand. We encourage you to look through these resources for yourself and your loved ones.

MD Mind Health

Text “MDMindHealth” to 898-211 to sign up to receive encouragement, reminders, and resources for staying connected.

Teen Health

<https://teenshealth.org/en/teens/your-mind>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Teens and Young Adults

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Teens-Young-Adults>

Spotlight on Young Adults Newsletter

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Spotlight-on-Young-Adults---Fall-2020.html?soid=1101289295579&aid=rhexz84F8D0>

Next Generation Coalition (student-led group)

<https://www.instagram.com/nextgenerationcoalition>
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u63yolRklyt-ZD1u_rLb5W1gZlQaTtxX/view

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Taking Care of Your Mental Health in the Face of Uncertainty

<https://afsp.org/story/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty>

BHA’s Intimate Partner Violence, Brain Injury and Child Maltreatment Resource Guide

https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/COVID-19%20IPV-TBI-Child%20Maltreatment%20Resource%20Guide_061120.pdf

Gender Spectrum Resources for Challenging Times

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/blog/resources-for-challenging-times>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources>

Black Mental Health Alliance

<https://blackmentalhealth.com>

Call 410-338-2642 or email info@blackmentalhealth.com

CDC: Mental Health and Coping with COVID-19:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>

CDC: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health:

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

SAMHSA: Warning Signs and Risk Factors for Emotional Distress:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/warning-signs-risk-factors>

College Student Resources:

Active Minds: mental health advocacy on college campuses

<https://www.activeminds.org>

Child Mind Institute – College Students: Tips for Supporting Learning at Home

<https://childmind.org/article/college-students-tips-for-supporting-learning-at-home>

McLean Harvard Medical School’s Tips to Help College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.mcleanhospital.org/news/tips-help-college-students-during-covid-19-pandemic>

Policy Lab’s Preparing for Mental Health Needs of College Students Amid COVID-19

<https://policylab.chop.edu/blog/preparing-mental-health-needs-college-students-amid-covid-19>

NAMI’s College and Your Mental Health

<https://nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Starting-the-Conversation>