

summer activity guide

Staff Resource:
Supporting Your Emotional
Well-Being

QUICK
GUIDE



About the Summer Activity Guides

Summers are for fun and engaged learning. In 2020 as the impact of the pandemic is widely felt, summer opportunities will be different for young people, families, and afterschool and summer program staff. The Summer Activity Guides were developed to help engage youth with supportive adults in a range of places.

The activities and resources in the Summer Activity Guides are intentionally designed to support youth-serving summer programs in driving consistent engagement and providing ongoing opportunities for youth skill-building and emotional well-being. In addition to the activities for youth, supplemental materials will be available to support professional development and enhance family engagement.

The Guides include 150 original activities and challenges organized by four different age groups (5-9) (10-12) (13-15) (16-18). The activities are adaptable for in-person and virtual instruction, or a hybrid of both, as well as sent as take-home packets.

All activities should be safely executed and aligned with state and local health guidelines.



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Supporting Your Emotional Well-Being

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INTRODUCTION

Working with and supporting youth during COVID-19 is uncharted territory. As staff of youth-serving programs, you are having to manage the physical safety and emotional well-being of the youth you serve, and at the same time, take care of yourself and your own physical and emotional health. You may have experienced significant changes in your own life, like having to homeschool a child or social isolating from your family and peers. You also may have also experienced significant stressors like the loss of a loved one or serious illness. With so much going on, it's easy to forget to take care of yourself.

The purpose of this resource is to provide guidance to you, a staff of youth-serving programs, with recognizing the signs and symptoms of significant stress and to provide specific actions you can take to support your emotional well-being. This guide is a supplement to the [Summer Activity Guide](#), which is a suite of activities and resources intentionally designed to support youth-serving summer programs in delivering programming through multiple approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Throughout this infectious disease outbreak, you may be feeling a range of emotions, including both positive and negative feelings, like anger, sadness, boredom, hope and fear. Everyone processes these feelings differently. As a first step, you should be aware of these reactions and be able to identify many of them as a sign of stress. It's important to remember that not all stress is bad, though. Stress is a natural response to situations where we feel overwhelmed or threatened, and can serve as a call to action or resource for responding to the situation.

Stress presents itself in our bodies, emotions, minds, actions, and relationships in many different ways. Common signs of stress during an infectious disease outbreak could include:

- Changes in energy levels, sleeping patterns or appetite
- Irritability, outbursts and frequent arguing
- Worrying excessively
- Isolating yourself from friends and family
- Having trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Physical pain, such as headaches and stomachaches

Beyond normal signs of stress, some people may experience more intense and long-lasting reactions. **“Traumatic stress”** occurs when someone experiences a traumatic event and their reactions persist and affect their daily lives after the event has ended. It negatively affects their daily functions as well as their interactions with other. Managing stress is always important, but especially important when we or our youth are at risk of experiencing traumatic stress.

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ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE STRESS

If you are feeling any of the symptoms described previously, know that you're not alone. You should also know that there are many daily habits and activities you can do to help yourself feel better. Below are tips for and suggestions for reducing your stress through everyday actions.

KNOW THE FACTS AND PROTECT YOURSELF

It's important to understand the risks associated with an infectious disease outbreak and how to protect yourself. Not only will this help to keep you healthy, but it will also give you a greater sense of control. Get your information from reputable sources, but at the same time, avoid watching the news 24/7. Too much media exposure can be unhealthy.

- Stay updated about what is happening with COVID-19 using reputable sources, such as the [CDC's website](#) or your state or local public health organizations.
- Reduce your exposure to news or social media that may cause fear or panic. If you find yourself checking your phone all day, take news apps off your phone, or select a time each day when you will read the news.
- Get smart on preventative measures to help protect you and your loved ones. This includes handwashing, wearing a mask in public places, and social distancing.
- Keep basic health supplies at your home (e.g., soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues, and a thermometer). If you take medications regularly, make sure you have a supply that will last through a 14-day quarantine period.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Maintaining your relationships with your friends and families is a great way to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness and boredom. Even if you cannot be in the same room – there are a number of ways you can stay connected to the people you care about most.

- Connect with friends and family via telephone, teleconfering (ex. Zoom, FaceTime, Skype), email, text messaging or social media. If possible, have a safe, socially distant hangout.
- Do not be afraid to discuss how you are feeling. Sometimes the best way to process our feelings is to voice them with others. They may be feeling the same feelings and can empathize.
- Be aware of stigma and treat others with kindness. Often during outbreaks and other events, certain groups are marginalized and blamed. You should feel empowered to question the assumptions people have against these groups. Have compassion for those who are ill or whose lives have been disrupted by the virus.

PRACTICE HEALTHY HABITS

Your emotional health is deeply connected to your physical health. Take the time to do the right things for your body. It will help to clear your mind and reduce your anxiety and stress.

- Start or maintain healthy habits. This includes eating healthy foods and drinking water, avoiding excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol, and getting at least 30 minutes of exercise daily.
- Get enough sleep and rest. Try as best you can to maintain your sleep patterns before COVID-19.

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- Practice mindfulness and find ways to relax your mind and body that work for you. This may include deep breathing, yoga, meditation, or walking outside.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking. Keep a gratitude journal or seek out news that is hopeful (e.g., positive news on vaccine development).

CREATE STRUCTURE AND SET BOUNDARIES

Similar to youth, adults also need to maintain structure to help retain a sense of control. You may, however, not be as productive with your day as you were before the outbreak, and that's totally okay. These are unprecedented times and there's no playbook for what to do right now. Be kind to yourself and remind yourself that you are doing the best you can.

- Set achievable goals for you and your family, and give up on unrealistic expectations for life at home during COVID-19. Each day set aside time to acknowledge your achievements for the day.
- Create a daily schedule for yourself. Build in time for relaxation and doing things that are fun to you.
- Put boundaries in place that prioritize your emotional and physical well-being. This might look like reducing how much you are working, or saying "no" to friend that wants to hang out in-person. Do what is within your comfort zone.

SEEK HELP

Sometimes what you are going through is too big or too much for you to handle on your own. Seek professional help if you are showing signs of stress or trauma that do not resolve relatively quickly.

Crisis Hotlines

- Connect with a trained counselor at SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS 66746.
- The Crisis Text Line serves anyone in any type of crisis 24/7. Text HOME to 741741.
- The National Suicide Prevention Line provides free and confidential support to people in emotional distress 24/7. Call them at 1-800-273-8255.

Service Locators

- If you are worried about meeting your basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing or healthcare, call, text or chat with your [local 211](#) to connect with a community resource specialist. Simply call 211.
- Find local mental health treatment by calling 1-800-662-HELP or visit <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>.

RESOURCES

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Website on Coping with Stress:

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

SAMHSA's Website on Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>

The 50 State Afterschool Network



The Summer Activity Guide has been developed for the 50 State Afterschool Network with leadership from the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network to engage and support children and youth nationwide.

In each state, the afterschool network is broadening opportunities for youth. Seeking equitable outcomes for underserved children to succeed in school and future jobs, a statewide afterschool network brings together cross-sector leaders with a common vision and coordinated strategy to advance quality afterschool and summer learning programs

Alabama Afterschool Community Network
Alaska Afterschool Network
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
Arkansas Out of School Network
California AfterSchool Network
Colorado Afterschool Partnership
Connecticut After School Network
Delaware Afterschool Network
Florida Afterschool Network
Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
Idaho Afterschool Network
Afterschool for Children and Teens Now (ACT Now) Coalition (IL)
Indiana Afterschool Network
Iowa Afterschool Alliance
Kansas Enrichment Network
Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance
Louisiana Center for Afterschool Learning
Maine Afterschool Network
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
Michigan After-School Partnership
Ignite Afterschool (MN)
Missouri AfterSchool Network
Mississippi Statewide Afterschool Network
Montana Afterschool Alliance
Beyond School Bells (NE)

Nevada Afterschool Network
New Hampshire Afterschool Network
New Jersey School- Age Care Coalition
NMOST (New Mexico Out of School Time) Network
New York State Network for Youth Success
North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs
North Dakota Afterschool Network
Ohio Afterschool Network
Oklahoma Partnership for Expanded Learning Opportunities
OregonASK
Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network
Rhode Island Afterschool Network
South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
South Dakota Afterschool Network
Tennessee Afterschool Network
Texas Partnership for Out of School Time
Utah Afterschool Network
Vermont Afterschool, Inc.
Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time
Washington Expanded Learning Opportunities Network
West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network
Wisconsin Afterschool Network
Wyoming Afterschool Alliance