

OCTOBER 2020

CHS Counselor's Corner

Announcements, News and Updates
from CHS School Counselors

HIGHLIGHTS

Dealing with Back to
School Anxiety

Virtual Rest and
Relaxation Room

Organizational and Time
Management Tips and
Conquering Text Anxiety

Suicide Prevention
Resources



A Message from your School Counselors

WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL!!

We sincerely hope that your family is safe and healthy during these challenging times. The School Counseling Department is committed to providing our students and parents with important information and resources to help ease the way. Best wishes for a positive transition back to school and we hope you find the information helpful.

Dealing with Back to School Anxiety During Covid

Child Mind Institute

Stay Calm, Listen, and Offer Reassurance

***Validate their feelings** - Give your child a safe space to articulate their feelings. Gently encourage them to communicate with you when they are ready.

***Set the tone** - Focus on the positive. Try not to lead with your own anxiety. Share factually what you know, and develop a list of questions to ask about things that are uncertain.

***Focus on the positive** - Facilitate dialogue about what is going well at school. What are they looking forward to? What have they enjoyed so far?

***Maintain a predictable routine** - Keeping a regular schedule keeps a sense of control, predictability, calm, and well-being. Children feel empowered if they can control some aspects of their life.

***Emphasize safety measures** - Express confidence that the schools have spent months planning to minimize risks and keep everyone safe. Provide understanding of acceptable risk.

***Encourage flexibility** - Provide reassurance that you are prepared for change in the event that there is a shift back to virtual learning.

***Know when to seek help** - If your child is encountering significant difficulty adjusting or attending school consistently, seeking help can make a big difference. Contact your School Counselor to discuss options for support.



Need a break?

*Explore the Virtual
Rest and Relaxation Room to
Stop, Breathe, and Reconnect*

*Enjoy all the benefits of
Room A114 from home~*

*Guided meditation, relaxing music, sleep
strategies, mobile apps and more!*

Here's the link to go visit:

<https://sites.google.com/chatham-nj.org/chathamrestandrelaxation/home>

it's 10 pm do you know where your homework is?



Does it seem like time is flying by, yet you have nothing but time?

Feel like you are always in catch-up mode?

Do you spend your day feeling very busy but then wondering why you didn't accomplish much?

Do you feel like you have fallen out of your routine?



want to get organized?

Check out our Organizational and Time Management Tips!

<https://www.chatham-nj.org/Domain/1298>

**Distance Learning-Time Management, Organization &
Study Skills**

Conquering Test Anxiety

- **Make it smaller** - *the test might seem like a life altering event, but remember there are "bigger" and more important things---the final grade in the course vs. the test, your overall performance in your classes, your health, your home, your family etc.*
- **Review** - *Instead of cramming the day or two before the test, take 15 minutes each evening reviewing the lesson from that morning and write down any questions to ask the teacher. This may result in a more immediate sense of confidence during the weeks and days leading up to the test.*
- **Writing** - *Write out your negative feelings, self-doubt, and your symptoms you're experiencing as the test approaches. After doing so, begin Positive Affirmations.*
- **Teach** - *48 hours before the test, try teaching the material to a friend or family member. If you stumble, this may mean that you only understand the material on the most superficial level and that a different study approach may be required.*
- **Positive Affirmations** - *A few minutes prior to the test, remind yourself that you are knowledgeable of the material, you've effectively studied for the test, you've been successful on other tests in life and that you have done everything in your power to be successful on this test.*
- **Controlled Breathing/Muscle Relaxation** - *As you sit down at your desk, on test day, start deep, controlled, mindful breathing, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Also, tense up your toes and then relax them. Do the same with your lower legs and keep moving up your body--tensing and relaxing your muscles until you reach the top of your head.*
- **Focus on coping and problem-solving skills** - *"If I get anxious, I will try calm breathing."*
- **Don't spend a lot of time on one question** - *If you don't know the answer, take a guess and move on. Remind yourself that you can still do well with a few wrong answers.*
- **Brain Dump** - *Use the margins of the test to immediately write out any key formulas or terms you might forget and need at some point in the test.*
- **Use a calendar** - *Commit to going in for extra help a certain amount of times.*

Out of the Darkness Experience?

AFSP.org/
NJTogether

Virtual Walk Day: November 1

We invite you to join us virtually on Sunday, November 1st for the statewide New Jersey Out of the Darkness Experience! While we may not be able to gather together in person this year, we will still come together to remember loved ones lost to suicide, embrace those with lived experience and honor the efforts of so many who work together to stop suicide. Participants and their teams will be safely walking throughout their neighborhoods, parks in their communities on the same day, sharing the reason why they walk. This is an opportunity to bring our messages of hope and awareness to the places we call home, so carry your walker bibs, wear your OOTD walk t-shirts and beads with pride, and share your experiences on social media using our hashtag **#AFSPNJ**

Everyone who is registered for a fall New Jersey Out of the Darkness Experience will be invited to join at the statewide New Jersey Experience on November 1 so there is no additional registration required. If you haven't already, register for your local experience today at afsp.org/njtogether

LIVESTREAM CEREMONY will begin online at 10:00 AM. Join us virtually as we acknowledge the ways in which suicide and mental illness have affected our lives and our loved ones during the annual Honor Beads Ceremony, share stories of hope and healing, and take time to recognize all of our wonderful top participants, teams, volunteers and sponsors furthering our mission to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide. Your support of AFSP will save lives as we continue to bring hope, research, and raise awareness and support for those with lived experience and those who have suffered a suicide loss.

Throughout OOTD Season

WHY I WALK: Registered walkers will be emailed an exclusive Out of the Darkness Experience sign to print! Personalize your bib with why you walk then take a walk and take a photo with your sign. We encourage you to put on your beads, be the voice or hope shirt etc. Share your fundraising link on social media with a picture of you walking and why you support OOTD using the hashtag **#AFSPNJ**. Please be sure to follow us on social media: [@afspnewjersey](https://www.facebook.com/afspnewjersey) on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

PACKET & MATERIALS: Our team captains and walkers who are not part of a team will have the opportunity to request packets with honor beads, resources, and more.

EARN YOUR OFFICIAL OUT OF THE DARKNESS T-SHIRT: Individuals who raise \$150 or more, will be shipped our exclusive 2020 Out of the Darkness t-shirt!

FREE PREVENTION EDUCATION: Join AFSP New Jersey Chapter for education programs, now presented online, to learn how you can be a lifesaver! For a list of upcoming events and to register go to: <https://afsp.org/chapter/new-jersey#events>

LUMINARIA FUNDRAISER: Shine a light on suicide prevention and bring HOPE to your home. Order 2 luminaria for \$25 or 4 for \$45. Proceeds will benefit the AFSP New Jersey Chapter and the 15 Out of the Darkness Experiences. This is a limited edition of 250 luminaria. Share your luminaria with us on social media using **#NJTogetherToFightSuicide!**

UPCOMING EVENTS: In addition to the walk day experience all registered walkers will be invited to take part in a fitness class, cooking demo, book club and more.

Learn more at [AFSP.org/NJTogether](https://afsp.org/njtogether)



**SHINE A
LIGHT ON
SUICIDE
PREVENTION**

PAIN IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Crisis Text Line

Text "NJ" to 741741

Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-8255

Second Floor Youth Hotline

(888) 222-2228

The Trevor Project

National Suicide Hotline

for LGBTQ Youth

(866) 488-7386

NJ Hope Line 24/7 Peer Support/Suicide Hotline

(855) 754-6735



Back To School with Grief and COVID-19:

A Resource Guide for Parents and Caregivers



Children are going back to school this year with a backpack full of feelings. Some may have been impacted by illness, death, or loss of income due to job loss. Some are happy to return but many are afraid of going back because of worries about getting the virus. Parents are now faced with the difficult decision of whether or not their child will return to in-person instruction or continue to learn remotely. With information changing on a daily basis, it is important for parents and caregivers to help children and teens understand how to cope with the uncertainty in the ever-changing world that we are living in.

NORMALIZE IT

Children take their cues from their parents and caregivers. Children and teens can sense when their parents or caregivers are anxious. It is important to normalize that it is okay to feel worried, scared, or uncertain about going back to school or deciding to stay home and learn remotely.



- **Let your child know** that you have worries too, but you will continue to ensure that they will be safe and supported. Share with them about how you cope with your own stress.
- **Ask questions.** Ask your child or teen directly what they are worried about and ask if they have questions about returning to school. You can have your child make a "worry list" and talk through each item.
- **Be honest.** Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.
- **Don't assume.** If you notice changes in your child's behavior, try saying what you are observing instead of assuming that you know what is happening. Realize that there is a good reason for your child's behavior.
- **Talk about what has changed.** Your children have experienced a myriad of losses during this pandemic. If they are going back to school after someone died, talk about what will be different for them. Even if they have not experienced the death of a loved one, they have lost their routines, connection to peers and teachers, and their sense of safety. Allow them to have space to talk about the good changes and the hard changes.
- **Self-care:** Grieving children benefit from healthy, caring adults who are modeling good self-care. Find ways to relax and enjoy time together by going for walks, trying a new activity, playing board games, or learning a new skill.

INCREASE THEIR SAFETY

Unfortunately, tough days are inevitable and can arise without warning so it is important to have a plan for how you will tackle those difficult days together and empower your child to seek out support when you are not around.



- **Plan for difficult days.** Milestone days (first day of school, school events, birthdays, or death anniversaries) can bring up big feelings for any child. Discuss what they can do if they feel sad, scared, or worried during the school day.
- **Access supportive adults.** Talk to their teachers, coaches, or counselor to ensure they are aware of how your child may be feeling. Have a plan for them to check in with that person during the school day if they need to and assure that they are able to leave class without asking or explaining.
- **Take breaks.** Your child may need time during the school day to leave the classroom and go for a walk before they can rejoin their lesson.
- **Transitional object.** It may be helpful for your child to have a special object that they can carry with them throughout the day to help soothe them during difficult days. Caregivers can also write a note for their child to keep in their backpack to read throughout the day.
- **Foster connection.** If your child is remotely learning, plan time for them to connect with friends or peers during the school day. Check out online gaming resources or set up a virtual play date so they can interact and connect with friends.

SEE BEHAVIOR AS INFORMATION

At Imagine, we let children and teens have all of their feelings. Wearing masks and social distancing can make children and teens feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. It may also be difficult for your child to articulate their feelings, so their distress can show up in their behavior. It is important to be on the lookout for changes in their behavior and to know when to intervene.



You may notice some of the following behaviors:

- **Infants and toddlers:** excessive crying or irritation in younger children, increased need for parental attention
- **Pre-school age:** returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting), excessive worry or sadness
- **School age:** difficulty focusing, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, irritability, headaches or unexplained body pain, lack of interest in activities
- **Teens:** avoidance of activities they previously found enjoyable, poor school performance, "acting out" behaviors, use of tobacco, alcohol, or other substances.



Here are some ways that can help:

- **Eat, sleep, and move:** Ensure that your child is maintaining routines such as quality sleep, regular eating, and getting exercise.
- **Quality time:** try to join your child in play and leisure activities whenever possible.
- **Catch your child being good.** By calling attention to your child when your child is being a good listener or coping appropriately, you increase the chance that your child will repeat those behaviors in the future.



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FIND SUPPORT FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

You or your child may experience increased stress during this pandemic. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. If you are in need of additional support, seek out the help of a trusted professional or request additional resources.



- Visit imaginenj.org for more information or speak with one of our clinicians at (908) 264-3100
- Locate support groups for grieving children at: <https://childrengrieve.org/find-support>
- For more information about how to support grieving students go to The Coalition for Grieving Students website: <https://grievingstudents.org/>
- For adults in need of mental health support: SAMHSA's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357) and TTY 1-800-487-4889
- For children/teens in NJ who need additional support: 2nd floor youth hotline: 888-222-2228 anytime or text them at 888-222-2228.
- Sample back to school talking points <https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/covid-19-pandemic-resources/>



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A CENTER FOR COPING WITH LOSS