



MONIQUE BURR

FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN, INC.
PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Dear Educator,

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to educate and empower communities to protect children from victimization. There are many factors that increase a child's risk, including family conflict, financial stress, divorce, mental health, disability, illness, death, substance abuse, domestic violence, and none of us could have imagined the effects of a pandemic. And abuse, social isolation, grief or other trauma increase concerns for risk of mental health problems in children, such as depression or anxiety. Trauma-informed care and resilience have been mentioned as possible solutions, but what does that mean?

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children (MBF) is providing the attached supplemental lesson plans for use in classrooms to help educators teach students developmentally appropriate strategies to promote resiliency and personal safety and to prevent victimization.

The lesson plans are based on key principles in trauma-informed care and Dr. Michele Borba's new book, ***Thrivers: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine***. Dr. Borba is an Educational Psychologist, International Speaker and Author, and MBF partner, and in her book, she shares that resilience is a teachable trait that will help children succeed now and later in life.

The lesson plans also include a review of the **5 Safety Rules** from the ***MBF Child Safety Matters®*** and ***MBF Teen Safety Matters®*** prevention education programs. If your school is using MBF Prevention Education Programs, the 5 Safety Rules will be familiar to students. If you are not, the 5 Safety Rules are important concepts that will be introduced to help keep students safe. We encourage you to learn more about our comprehensive, evidence-based/evidence-informed, fun, and easy-to-use lessons.

Known benefits of consistent prevention education implementation, such as that provided by **MBF Prevention Education Programs**, include:

- Lower dropout rates
- Improved attendance
- Improved school culture
- Increased test scores and grade point averages

If you are new to MBF, we want you to know that **Florida public schools receive our prevention education programs and resources at NO COST**. If you've ordered in the past, but haven't ordered this year, it's not too late. There's still time to order and implement lessons this school year. Additionally, the lessons can be delivered virtually, and we also have mental health and substance abuse supplemental lessons. **To learn more about our programs, or to order program materials for students in grades K-12, visit www.mbfpreventioneducation.org.**

To learn more about Dr. Michele Borba's newest book, *Thrivers: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine* Thrivers, visit www.micheleborba.com. Additional resources include 7 Essential Character Traits to Help Kids Thrive, Parent Resources, and a FREE Educator Discussion Guide.

Please help us better protect children and create Thrivers by teaching your students these brief lessons. For additional information or assistance, email us at info@mbfpreventioneducation.org or call 904-642-0210.

Sincerely,
The MBF Team

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April – National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Lesson Plan: Grades 3-5

Grade Level	3-5		
Lesson Length	30 minutes		
Lesson Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will participate in Child Abuse Prevention Month activities. Students will increase their awareness of resilience, coping skills, and character strengths relating to resilience. Students will identify Safe Adults and ways they can help adults keep them safe. Students will learn the <i>MBF Child Safety Matters®</i> 5 Safety Rules and will identify ways to use them to help them stay safe. 		
Key Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse Confidence Cope Coping Skills Curiosity Empathy Healthy Boundaries Integrity Optimism Perseverance Prevention Resilience Safe Adult Safe Friend Self-Regulation 		
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBF Safety Rules Poster (optional) Piece of drawing paper Pencil Markers, colored pencils, or crayons White board or chart paper 		
Related Florida Standards & Related Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Health Education	3rd Grade LAFS.3.L.1.1 LAFS.3.SL.1.1 LAFS.SL.1.3 LAFS.3.SL.2.6 HE.3.C.1.1 HE.3.B.4.2 HE.3.B.4.4 HE.3.B.5.2 HE.3.B.5.3 HE.3.B.5.5 HE.3.P.7.1 HE.3.P.8.1	4th Grade LAFS.4.L.1.1 HE.4.C.1.1 HE.4.B.4.2 HE.4.B.4.4 HE.4.B.5.2 HE.4.B.5.4 HE.4.B.5.5 HE.4.P.7.2 HE.4.P.8.1	5th Grade LAFS.5.L.1.1 LAFS.5.L.1.2 HE.5.C.1.1 HE.5.B.4.4 HE.5.B.5.2 HE.5.B.5.4 HE.5.P.7.2 HE.5.P.8.1

<p>Additional Resources (For teachers and parents)</p>	<p>Monique Burr Foundation for Children www.mbfpreventioneducation.org</p> <p>Dr. Michelle Borba, author of <i>Thrivers: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine</i> www.micheleborba.org</p> <p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Essentials Framework Resources https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/essentials.html https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/essentials-for-childhood-framework508.pdf</p> <p>Darkness To Light - Resources on child sexual abuse www.d2l.org</p> <p>Institute for Responsible Online and Cellphone Communication – Resources for parents and educators including tip sheets and a contract for families for online usage www.iroc2.org/149.html</p> <p>National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) www.missingkids.org/</p> <p>NCMEC Cyber Tipline https://report.cybertip.org/</p> <p>National Child Traumatic Stress Network - Resources on resiliency https://www.nctsn.org/search?query=resiliency</p> <p>Prevent Child Abuse Florida - Child Abuse Prevention Month Toolkit https://www.ounce.org/CAP_toolkit.html</p> <p>Prevent Child Abuse America www.preventchildabuse.org</p> <p>The Role of Educators Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/educator</p> <p>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Protective Factors to Promote Well-Being https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/</p>
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Prior to the Lesson:

- Print and display the MBF Safety Rules Poster. If you don't have a poster, write the following information where students will be able to see it during the lesson: on the board, on an overhead, or on a sheet of chart paper.
 - **The MBF 5 Safety Rules**
 - Safety Rule #1 - Know What's Up
 - Safety Rule #2 - Spot Red Flags
 - Safety Rule #3 - Make a Move
 - Safety Rule #4 - Talk It Up
 - Safety Rule #5 - No Blame | No Shame
- Note: Bolded and underlined words in the script are key terms that students need to understand. Write the Key Terms on the board to refer to throughout the lesson. The definitions of these terms are explained throughout the lesson. Please explain their meaning as you present the lesson to ensure comprehension.

Begin the Lesson:

- *At the beginning of the lesson, reinforce classroom and small group expectations for respectful discussions (i.e. listen before responding, don't interrupt, respect the opinions of others). Remind students to use "I" language rather than the more accusatory "you" language when responding to others. If they have personal stories to share, remind them to wait and share at the end of the lesson if there is time. It may be helpful for students to have paper and a pen/pencil out during the lesson to write down any words or concepts they don't understand, questions they may have, or stories they may wish to share with you later.*
- Good Morning/Afternoon students. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Today, we're going to talk about resilience and what it means to be resilient. Before we talk about it what it means to be resilient, I want to make sure we all understand the words used to describe the month of April, Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- How many of you have heard the word abuse? *(Raise hands)*
- **Abuse** is when an adult, or another child, hurts a child on purpose. Abuse can happen by a stranger, but it can also happen by an adult you know and trust.
- Does anyone know what **prevention** means? *(Elicit responses)*
- To prevent something means to stop it from happening. So, if we prevent abuse, we stop it from happening. That's why we are doing this lesson today; we want to try to prevent abuse, but also talk about how to overcome when bad or sad things happen. In life, things don't always go our way and that's normal and okay. Next,

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Lesson Plan: Grades 3-5

let's talk about resilience and ways that can help us deal with things when they don't go our way.

- How many of you have heard the term **resilience**? *(Raise hands)*
- Does anyone know what resilience means? *(Elicit responses)*
- **Resilience** is the ability to bounce back when bad or sad things happen or get better after going through difficulties or challenges like child abuse, money problems, divorce, sickness, death, substance or alcohol abuse, and even the pandemic. It is normal to get upset or sad for a period of time; we all experience and deal with stress differently. Resilience and coping skills are not something that you either have or don't have, they are skills you will continue to develop as you grow.
- Let's talk more about coping skills.
- What do you think it means to cope with something? *(Elicit responses)*
- **Cope** means to deal with or handle a situation or feeling. How you react to stress, a sad situation, or problem is called coping. When we talk about coping with something, it means to deal with something difficult or challenging. Every one of us goes through challenging times when we need to cope. Coping with stress and challenges is something we all do and it's important to learn healthy coping skills.
- **Coping skills** are ways to deal with stress and problems.
- Now that we know more about what it means to cope and what coping skills are, what are some examples of coping skills? *(Elicit responses making sure to include things like, painting, drawing, writing, listening to music, going for a walk/run, riding a bike, playing a video game, reading, and watching TV/videos.)*
- Thank you for sharing. Keep in mind, we are all different and we all use different activities or strategies depending on our interests and personalities. An activity that helps one person cope might not be enjoyable or may even cause stress for another person.
- The important thing to know is that learning to cope in positive and healthy ways increases resilience.
- Another important part of developing resilience is having safe, stable, and nurturing relationships. Hopefully, we all have people in our lives that help us and encourage us. The support of friends and family is important to all of us and helps build resilience. When you are resilient, you rely on those people to overcome challenges and work through difficulties.

- There are 7 character strengths that relate to resilience.
 - Confidence – **Confidence** is being sure of yourself and believing in your abilities.
 - Empathy – **Empathy** is the ability to understand and share the feeling of another. You can think of it as learning to walk in another person's shoes. We often use this character strength when discussing the topic of bullying or cyberbullying.
 - Self-Regulation – **Self-Regulation** or self-control is the ability to slow down and think to make educated, safe, and healthy choices.
 - Integrity – **Integrity** is always being respectful and honest, no matter who is watching or listening.
 - Curiosity – **Curiosity** is having the desire to learn and build your knowledge.
 - Perseverance – **Perseverance** is the ability to overcome challenges and continuing to do something even if it is hard or you might fail.
 - Optimism – **Optimism** is seeing the positive side of things and expecting good things to happen.
- Developing these strengths within ourselves often helps us create strong, healthy, and positive relationships with friends and family, which as we discussed, help us be more resilient.
- For the purpose of today's lesson, we'll focus on the character strength self-regulation.
- Self-regulation, or self-control includes your thoughts and actions.
- You have the ability to choose your actions, reactions, and establish healthy boundaries for yourself. **Healthy boundaries** mean putting what's most important first. This includes getting enough sleep, having a positive attitude, being kind, making safe choices, developing healthy coping skills, getting exercise, and spending time with supportive family and friends.
- A healthy friendship or relationship occurs when you are supportive and respect each other's time, activities, boundaries, and opinions, even when you disagree. Positive and healthy relationships with friends and family should make you feel supported and more confident.

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- Let's do a Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down activity to learn more about healthy boundaries and identify healthy vs. unhealthy coping skills. As I read a way people chose to cope, show me a Thumbs Up if it's a healthy way and a Thumbs Down if it's unhealthy.
 - Dance or listen to music (*Thumbs Up/Healthy*)
 - Eat a bunch of junk food (*Thumbs Down/Unhealthy*)
 - Exercise or play sports (*Thumbs Up/Healthy*)
 - Stay up late and not get enough sleep (*Thumbs Down/Unhealthy*)
 - Watch TV/videos for hours and hours (*Thumbs Down/Unhealthy*)
 - Color, draw, or write in a journal (*Thumbs Up/Healthy*)
- Self-regulation or self-control will help you make safe and smart decisions when it comes to healthy boundaries, including limiting how much time you spend on digital devices, watching videos, playing games or messaging apps with friends.
- Real-life relationships are not the only ones we need to be concerned about. A lot of teens rely on technology for their social interactions. If you spend more time on your phone than you do with your family or friends in real life, you may want to reassess and readjust. This is another example of self-regulation.
- Remember, self-regulation, resilience and coping skills are not something that you either have or don't have, resilience is something you can build over time by using coping skills, identifying healthy boundaries and positive relationships with friends and family.
- Resilience helps you overcome difficulties and challenges, but safety rules can help protect you in challenging or unsafe situations.
- There are 5 Safety Rules from the **MBF Child Safety Matters®** program that can help you stay safe from all types of child abuse and help you use the skills we've discussed today. For some of you this may be review, for others, these may be new ways to help you make positive and healthy choices.
- *If you have a poster visible or wrote the 5 Safety Rules on the board prior to the lesson, point to each rule as you talk about it.*
- **Safety Rule #1 is Know What's Up.** Knowing what's up means knowing your personal information and knowing emergency safety procedures for school and home, and for each place you go.
 - Being aware of healthy boundaries, positive coping skills, and knowing whether situations are safe and appropriate, and if people's behaviors are safe or not.

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- Surrounding yourself with positive friends and family that show the character strengths we talked about today; confidence, empathy, self-regulation or self-control, integrity, curiosity, perseverance, and optimism.
- **Safety Rule #2 is Spot Red Flags.** Spotting Red Flags means you can see warning signs that might tell you that a person or situation is unsafe. One way to think of it is like a stoplight and the red light means do not go. They are not really red flags, but they are warning signs that let you know that you, or someone you know, might not be safe. Red Flags may include:
 - mean or abusive words, hurtful touches, plays games about private body parts, asks you to keep an unsafe secret.
 - adults or other kids trying to trick, force, or manipulate you into making unsafe or unhealthy choices.
- **Safety Rule #3 is Make a Move.** After you **Spot a Red Flag**, or recognize that a situation or person is unsafe, you can **Make a Move** by:
 - getting away from an unsafe situation or person if you can, or
 - staying away from unsafe or inappropriate people and situations.
 - using your self-regulation or self-control skills to make educated, safe, and healthy choices.
- **Safety Rule #4 is Talk It Up.** Talking It Up means that you have a voice and you can use it to help keep you and others safe. Here are some ways you can **Talk It Up**:
 - use an assertive and confident voice to say “No” to any person not respecting your boundaries or telling you to make unsafe or unhealthy choices.
 - and if you **Spot a Red Flag**, you should always talk to a Safe Adult.
- A **Safe Adult** is someone you know and trust to keep you safe, someone you can talk to if you ever feel unsafe, if you've ever been hurt, or if you're not sure if a situation is unsafe, and someone who doesn't break any safety rules or ask you to break safety rules.
- What qualities would you want in a Safe Adult? *(Elicit responses to include, someone who is a good listener, someone they can talk to about difficult topics, someone who follows the Safety Rules, does not encourage them to break the Safety Rules, and someone who would know how to get you help.)*
- Think for a minute if you have someone with some these qualities who is old enough to take care of you. I want you to try to think of at least two Safe Adults with these qualities, one who lives in your home with you and one who lives outside of your home.
- Even if you cannot think of someone right now, you can always talk to a Safe Adult at school. Examples of Safe Adults at school could be a teacher, a school counselor, or the Principal.

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- Talking to a Safe Adult can help you learn, help prevent you from making unhealthy choices or help protect you from unsafe situations.
- When you have a strong connection to a Safe Adult, you are more likely to develop healthy coping skills that allow you to deal with problems and develop resilience.
- You can also talk to a **Safe Friend**, someone you trust, who will support you and help you talk to a Safe Adult. A Safe Friend is someone who can help you talk to a Safe Adult. You should never tell a Safe Friend instead of a Safe Adult. A Safe Friend is someone to help you talk to a Safe Adult about unsafe or inappropriate situations or people.
- And any relationship you have with a Safe Adult or a Safe Friend, should be a positive relationship that makes you feel supported.
- **Safety Rule #5 is No Blame | No Shame.** This rule reminds you that you should never feel ashamed to talk to a Safe Adult if you've been hurt or about choices you've made, because making mistakes is part of growing up.
 - If you are ever hurt, it is never your fault, no matter what happens. No matter when, where, how, or who hurts you, it is never your fault and it is never too late to tell.
 - Even if the person who hurts you tells you that what happened is a secret, or that you did something wrong, or that you will get in trouble if you tell, you should still tell.

Activity:

- *Activity is meant to be done individually.*
- Next, we are going to do an activity to practice self-regulation and brainstorm safe and healthy ways that help you cope. I want you to create a self-portrait, draw a picture, or a word cloud, something creative that includes ways you stay healthy and safe. I'd like you to also find a way to include a Safe Adult in your picture.
- *Allow 10 - 15 minutes for the activity.*
- What are some of the ways that you cope that help make you more resilient? (*Elicit responses*)
- There are hundreds of ways to cope and we all use different activities or strategies to help distract us from worry about something or to make us feel better.

Wrap-Up:

- Great work today. Thank you for participating in the lesson to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month. Adults are responsible for keeping children safe, but it is important to know that as you get older, your choices will impact your personal safety and there are things you can do to increase your ability to overcome when bad or sad things happen. Remember, we all go through and cope with stress differently. Learning how to use the 5 Safety Rules can help you make healthy decisions and demonstrate resilience.
- To finish up today, let's all say the **5 Safety Rules** together.

Safety Rule #1 – Know What's Up

Safety Rule #2 – Spot Red Flags

Safety Rule #3 – Make a Move

Safety Rule #4 – Talk It Up

Safety Rule #5 – No Blame | No Shame

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THE 5 SAFETY RULES[®]



Know What's Up



Spot Red Flags



Make a Move



Talk It Up



No Blame | No Shame

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Safety Connection: Child Abuse Prevention Month Activity

Dear Parent or Guardian,

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Today, your student participated in the Child Abuse Prevention Month lesson provided by the Monique Burr Foundation for Children (MBF). **MBF Prevention Education Programs** teach children and teens how to recognize and respond to bullying, cyberbullying, child abuse, and digital dangers. The programs teach that adults are responsible for children and teens safety, but also details ways that they can help adults keep them safe. For additional information and resources, visit our website at www.mbfpreventioneducation.org.

During the lesson, we talked about resilience and what it means to be resilient. The lesson plans are based on Dr. Michele Borba's new book, **Thrivers: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine**. In addition to 7 character strengths that relate to resilience, we learned how the **MBF 5 Safety Rules** can help them stay safe. Learning ways to stay safe builds protective factors that can help to lessen risks for child abuse and neglect and build resilience in kids. To learn more about resilience and the associated character traits, visit www.micheleborba.com.

MATCHING KEY TERMS

Parent Instructions: As a follow-up of today's lesson, below are key terms and their definition. Complete this activity with your child as a review to what they learned. Match the key term with the definition by drawing a line from the term to the definition.

KEY TERMS

1. OPTIMISM
2. SELF-REGULATION
3. INTEGRITY
4. PERSEVERANCE
5. CONFIDENCE
6. SAFETY RULES
7. COPING SKILLS
8. CURIOSITY
9. SAFE ADULT
10. RESILIENCE
11. EMPATHY
12. PREVENTION

DEFINITIONS

- A.** The ability to overcome challenges and continuing to do something even if it is hard or you might fail.
- B.** Ways to deal with stress or problems.
- C.** The ability to slow down and think to make educated, safe, and healthy choices.
- D.** Having the desire to learn and build your knowledge.
- E.** Seeing the positive side of things and expecting good things to happen.
- F.** The ability to bounce back when bad or sad things happen.
- G.** Always being respectful and honest, no matter who is watching or listening.
- H.** Being sure of yourself and believing in your abilities.
- I.** Someone you know and trust to keep you safe, someone you can talk to if you ever feel unsafe, if you've ever been hurt, or if you're not sure if a situation is unsafe.
- J.** The ability to understand and share the feeling of another. Think of it as learning to walk in another person's shoes.
- K.** The action of stopping something from happening.
- L.** 5 safety rules that can help you stay safe from all types of child abuse and unsafe situations.

Safety Connection: Child Abuse Prevention Month Activity

WORD SEARCH

Parent Instructions: Complete this activity with your child as an additional review to today's lesson. While searching for each word, ask your child what the word means, what they learned, and how they can use the word or concept to help adults keep them safe. For additional information and resources, visit www.mbfpreventioneducation.org.

OPTIMISM
SELF-REGULATION
INTEGRITY

PERSEVERANCE
CONFIDENCE
SAFETY RULES

COPING SKILLS
CURIOSITY
SAFE ADULT

RESILIENCE
EMPATHY
PREVENTION

O	E	S	X	I	C	I	Q	N	R	J	L	U	R
C	P	L	N	U	N	V	J	B	S	O	G	H	E
O	A	T	L	P	Y	T	O	W	F	E	A	N	S
P	B	E	I	N	O	O	E	T	K	K	F	W	I
I	G	R	T	M	Q	P	G	G	V	L	P	N	L
N	N	B	Z	Q	I	N	H	U	R	U	W	F	I
G	X	I	M	L	D	S	R	Z	J	I	O	P	E
S	M	W	J	Y	N	O	M	K	J	X	T	B	N
K	S	A	F	E	T	Y	R	U	L	E	S	Y	C
I	G	I	F	C	U	R	I	O	S	I	T	Y	E
L	L	P	E	R	S	E	V	E	R	A	N	C	E
L	S	A	F	E	A	D	U	L	T	T	Y	V	C
S	E	A	G	C	O	N	F	I	D	E	N	C	E
O	V	D	H	X	B	E	M	P	A	T	H	Y	Y
T	L	M	V	N	O	I	T	N	E	V	E	R	P
N	O	I	T	A	L	U	G	E	R	F	L	E	S

IDENTIFYING & REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse and neglect, which is defined by state statute, impacts millions of children every year in the United States. Therefore, it is important to recognize the indicators of abuse, and understand one's obligations to report abuse to protect children.

Indicators Of Abuse

- » Malnourished/Hungry
- » Tired/Lethargic
- » Chronic injuries
- » Bruises
- » Human bite marks
- » Untreated injuries
- » Head injuries
- » Non-accidental burns
- » Poor relations with peers
- » Poor academic performance
- » Change in behavior or attitude
- » Disruptive, impulsive, aggressive
- » Passive, depressed, withdrawn

Disclosure

Disclosure is often a process, not a one-time event.

- » Less than 1/4 of victims disclose immediately after abuse occurs.
- » Less than 1/4 may disclose from 1 month to 5 years later.
- » Over 1/2 may wait more than 5 years to disclose, if at all.

Ways children may attempt to disclose abuse:

- » **Hinted Disclosure:** "A neighbor is messing with me."
- » **Questioned Disclosure:** "What would happen if somebody was hurting a kid and they told someone about it?"
- » **Conditional Disclosure:** "I need to tell you something, but if I do, you have to promise not to tell."

Do...

- » Support, believe, and reassure the child
- » Understand your limits, you are not an investigator
- » Provide a quiet, safe environment
- » When you are done talking to the child, write down the child's exact words
- » Ask limited, open-ended questions
- » Respect the child's right to privacy
- » Seek help and advice
- » Report any suspicions of abuse/neglect

Don't...

- » Make assumptions or promises
- » Show shock or other emotions
- » Interrogate or investigate
- » Put words in the child's mouth
- » Be judgmental about the abuser; it is often someone the child loves/trusts
- » Assume someone else will report abuse

Reporting Abuse

In all states, professionals that work with children are **Mandatory Reporters**. In some states, **EVERY ADULT** is a **Mandatory Reporter**. You do not have to have proof abuse is occurring. If you have a **reasonable suspicion** that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected, you **must report** it to your state's child welfare agency. Visit www.childwelfare.gov/organizations for a list of state agencies and contact information. For abuse in sports organizations, report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport. For more information and additional resources, visit www.mbfpreventioneducation.org.

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Social Isolation and Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many students have been or continue to be isolated at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most have also been exposed to frightening information about the pandemic on TV and online. Some have been directly impacted or even suffered the loss of a loved one as a result of Covid-19. These experiences, along with the anxiety of the unknown, can result in grief and trauma. "Since the start of the pandemic, the National Alliance on Mental Illness has heard from many young adults experiencing anxiety and depression, which the organization attributes partly to social isolation. The group has cautioned parents and teachers to look for warning signs, including severe risk-taking behavior, significant weight loss, excessive use of drugs or alcohol and drastic changes in mood."

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/12/health/covid-teenagers-mental-health.html>

What is Social Isolation?

Social Isolation is a lack of social connections and an absence of relationships with family, friends, neighbors, peers and/or society at large. When socially isolated, children and adolescents are more likely to experience high rates of loneliness, depression, and anxiety.

Why is it a problem?

- Studies have found established links between loneliness and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.¹
- There has been a 22% decline in college enrollment from 2019 to 2020.²
- Teens between 14 and 17 years-old that spend 7+ hours a day online are twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression.³

Recognizing Youth Experiencing Problems

Whether students are attending school traditionally or virtually, students may have difficulty focusing on their schoolwork or completing assignments. To effectively address students' academic needs, their social-emotional needs must be met to help avoid feelings of depression and/or hopelessness. It is important to pay close attention to changes in student's participation level in class or drastic grade changes.

Using Trauma-Informed Principles

Key principles in trauma-informed care state that students benefit from opportunities to regain a sense of personal safety and may need help or assistance with self-regulation. While it is important for students to have structure and hold them to high academic standards, it is also important for students to build relationships, make connections, and know that others care about their well-being. Being flexible and empathetic is key when holding students accountable. A student's distractibility and inability to complete assignments may be due to a personal or home situation; however, sharing this can be difficult. Students may feel vulnerable and embarrassed to share, which then perpetuates their isolation.

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1. Teens in Covid Isolation: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/12/health/covid-teenagers-mental-health.html>
 2. National Student Clearinghouse. <https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/blog/high-school-class-of-2020-college-enrollments-decline-22-compared-to-2019-class/>
 3. Twenge, J. M. & Campbell, W. K., *Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents: Evidence from a population-based study*. Preventive Medicine Reports, Volume 12, 2018, Pages 271-283, ISSN 2211-3355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2018.10.003>.

Resiliency and Relationships

For students to cope with trauma and to overcome feelings of social isolation, it is critical for them to find ways to connect with others. It is important to allow students opportunities to see, hear, and interact with each other and their teacher. Here are some ways educators can connect with students:

- Take turns sharing one tough moment and one hopeful moment of the day.
- Create conferencing sessions for students and/or opportunities to connect privately with School Counselors or other Safe Adults.
- Schedule a virtual scavenger hunt that allows students to see, hear, and interact with each other and their teacher.
- Assign groupwork or start a book club to provide students the opportunity to collaborate.
- Find the positive and share inspirational stories with students to help foster hope.
- Have students share positive affirmations and/or things that they are grateful for each day.
- Encourage spreading Kind Vibes to others.
- Provide students with healthy coping strategies.

Supporting Students at Home

When children are stressed, they may have difficulty controlling their emotions and communicating effectively, especially with adults. However, connections with adults at home are more important than ever during difficult or stressful times. Encourage parents or guardians to make time each day to be available to talk, play, do an activity together, or just be in the same room and help them understand signs of stress to watch for. Signs of stress look different based on age and developmental level, but may be displayed as:

- Changes in sleeping, eating, or other normal habits/behaviors
- Headaches, stomach aches, weight loss, or other physical complaint.
- Risk-taking behavior, use of drugs or alcohol, or drastic changes in mood.
- Spending large amounts of time alone.

Additional Resources

In addition to concerns about youth mental health, many children have been isolated at home with an abuser. Many organizations report a decrease in child abuse reports since the pandemic began and children were out of school. Now more than ever, it is critical that all youth be provided with personal safety education. **MBF Prevention Education Programs** educate and protect children and teens from all types of bullying, abuse, and victimization. MBF also provides *MBF Mental Health Matters*, supplemental lessons for *MBF Child Safety Matters®* and *MBF Teen Safety Matters®* that address mental and emotional health and substance use and abuse. They are developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and include the same MBF 5 Safety Rules to educate and empower students to develop coping skills, recognize mental health issues, prevent substance abuse and learn how to seek help for themselves or a friend. For additional information, support, and resources, visit www.mbfpreventioneducation.org.

Resources for Educators

<https://www.mbfpreventioneducation.org/learn-more/online-training/>
<https://www.mbfpreventioneducation.org/resource-type/educator-resources/>
https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/news_item/ten-ways-overcome-barriers-student-engagement-online/
https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/resource-guide/trauma_informed_school_strategies_during_covid-19.pdf

Resources for Parents

<https://www.mbfpreventioneducation.org/learn-more/online-training/>
<https://www.mbfpreventioneducation.org/resource-type/parent-resources/>
<https://parentandteen.com/coping-skills/>
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-coping-with-covid-19.shtml>
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress.html>