

Dear Families/Caregivers,

The stress from a traumatic event can disrupt brain development, and if not addressed, may cause physical and mental health problems in children and teens. We have been learning some tools to manage our emotions and the stress caused by the recent events.

We learned that by changing a feeling, a thought, or a behavior we can improve our emotional and physical well-being. We practiced pausing and breathing deeply to help to calm our minds and bodies. We also practiced:

- changing our feelings through mindfulness exercises,
- noticing and changing our negative thoughts, and
- changing our behavior by taking care of ourselves.

Here are some suggestions for ways to help your teen stress manage their stress:

- Encourage your teen to practice breathing deeply. Consider doing a breathing exercise with your teen. For example, sit or lie comfortably. Put your hands on your abdomen. As you inhale slowly through the nose to the count of four, feel your hands raise as your abdomens expand. Hold your breath for a moment. Then exhale slowly through your mouth for the count of four. Feel your hands lower as your abdomens return to normal.
- Consider creating a designated quiet space where family members can retreat to when feeling uncomfortable emotions. Allow your teen to choose when they need time to go to the quiet space to calm their thoughts.
- Help your teen focus on the people, things, or activities they love. Encourage your teen to create a gratitude list. Challenge the teen to write one thing they are grateful for using the letters of the alphabet.
- Encourage your teen practice healthy habits to help their bodies manage stress better. Allow time each day for your teen to exercise. Provide your teen with access to healthy foods and water. Encourage your teen to get the sleep their bodies require each night.

Managing one's emotions and taking care of oneself is important for recovering from a traumatic event. Encourage your teen to think about healthy ways they can manage their emotions.