Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations and our entire community has been impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19. We are all experiencing varying degrees of stress, fear, and anxiety. Knowing that we all respond differently to these feelings, we want to provide some tools to help our students (and parents) cope with the situation and know that, though physically distant, we are here for you. Please do not hesitate to reach out for additional guidance on implementing any of the advice or ideas provided below. Email Amy Key, LSSP, at Akey@allsaintsschool.org with questions.

Identifying Feelings

A good start for children to begin coping successfully is to identify their feelings. It is important for us to talk with our children about how they’re feeling rather than assume you know, or that they are able to identify/name what they’re experiencing. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **In My Heart** This is a great book for younger children to read with an adult and label different ways we feel. Listening to this story together can be a great way lead into conversations about the different ways we are feeling, including strong unpleasant emotions which many people are experiencing right now. Children can benefit from expanding emotional vocabulary and normalizing all feelings, those that are pleasant as well as unpleasant.
- **Activity**: Design a Music Playlist - have your child pick a preferred emotion (happy, calm, etc.) and help them make a list of songs that inspire them to feel that emotion.
- **Worksheet**: *My Anger Buttons* (you could draw this on a piece of paper and use it for any emotion you want to explore with your child. This can be used with positive emotions as well to lead into self-care activities)
- **Worksheet**: Help your older child learn to connect how their Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions are connected.

Coping Skills

All students experience varying degrees of stress or frustration at times, particularly in situations like we are currently facing in our community. We want to support their ability to cope with these feelings through healthy activities. Mindfulness activities, self-care, guided relaxation, taking breaks/walks, etc. are all examples of intentional activities used to manage stress or negative emotions. Model these things for your children and have them participate with you. Try some of the following ideas to get started:

- **Animal Live Cams**:
  - Baltimore Aquarium
  - Monterey Bay Aquarium (with calming music)
  - Florida Bald Eagles
  - Shark Lagoon
Activity: Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt - find and collect five things they see, four things that make noise, three things with texture, two things that smell, and one thing they taste. Focusing children on their senses helps ground them.

Activity: Drawing as a Way to Manage Emotions - This is a short activity to promote a positive mood, and also help children calm their physical and/or emotional state in a healthy way.

Activity: Create a Coping Skills Book. Cut two sheets of plain paper into 1/4 sections. Draw things or activities that make the child feel better (older kids may like to include positive quotes). Staple along one side to create a “book” or punch holes and tie the pages together with yarn.

Activity: Foster self-care for your student. It is helpful to make time to explore our interests and engage in activities we enjoy. This calendar can make the process more intentional. Pleasant Events Calendar

Video: Enjoy doing a dance tutorial as a family to enjoy some fun, movement, and laughs. Make a video and share the laughs with others!

Activity: Color Me Calm (Lerner, 2019) is an activity that you can do with your kids to calm everyone, yourself included! Basic activity steps:
- Have everyone fold a paper in half and color one side their favorite color and the other side their least favorite color.
- Point to the favorite color and breathe in, imagining it filling you up.
- Point to the least favorite color and breathe out, imagining bad thoughts leaving your body in a cloud of the bad color.

Activity: Muscle Makeover (Lerner, 2018) is another soothing activity that you can do right alongside your children. Here are the basic activity steps:
- Sit upright in your chair.
- Scrunch up your entire face like you just smelled something really bad.
- Hold for 5 seconds and then let your entire face relax into a calm expression. Repeat four times.
- Clench your fists as tight as you can and hold for 5 seconds, then release. Repeat four times.
- Push your arms out at about a 35 degree angle from your body, stretching them as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds and then release to let your arms fall gently at your sides. Repeat 4 times.
- Push the soles of your feet into the floor as hard as you can, holding onto your chair or desk for leverage. Hold for 5 seconds and release, relaxing your legs. Repeat four times.
- Curl your toes inside your shoes as tight as you can, holding for 5 seconds. Then release your toes to lie flat in your shoes. Repeat four times.

Video: A brief video to guide stress relief from Watch Wellcast for older students.

Movement Breaks (targeting a younger audience) are helpful to boost mood and relieve stress:
- Go Noodle (also available as an app)
- Cosmic Kids Yoga
- Activity: HIIT Workout for Kids
- Activity: Shake it Off

Guided Relaxation (targeting a younger audience)
- Video: Peace Out for Kids - Balloon
- Download: Breathing Exercises
- Video: Square Breathing

Guided Relaxation (targeting upper elementary and older students)
Keeping Perspective

When challenging things are going on around us, it is easy to focus our attention on problems or things that are not going well. To help our children navigate the changes they’re experiencing due to COVID-19, we can help them work on refocusing themselves in ways that create more neutral or positive feelings.

- **Activity:** Help your student focus on the good around them and keep a positive attitude. This [Gratitude Scavenger Hunt](#) can help.
- **Activity:** “Holding on and Letting Go” - Have your child trace each one of their hands on 2 separate pieces of paper. On one hand tracing, have your child write and/or draw what the child has control over. On the other hand tracing, have your child write and/or draw what the child doesn’t have control over and needs to “let go”. You can then have your child rip, crumble, and throw away what they need to “let go” to help them focus on the things they can impact, rather than worrying about things out of their control. This [visual](#) is an example of how to guide a conversation with older students and focus on things within their control.
- **Worksheet:** Help your student explore his or her strengths with this [activity](#).
- **Video:** We can do hard things. [Consider watching this video](#) with your child to facilitate a conversation about perseverance.
- **Activity:** When we are going through challenging times, an activity like [3 Good Things](#) can be helpful.

Reach Out and Connect

If you need more support in keeping you and your children strong and healthy through this difficult time, reach out and connect with your All Saints family. Don’t be afraid to let your friends, family, teachers, or those that love you know when you need to talk.