

# Navigating the Emotions of a Pandemic

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Throughout the pandemic, educators and parents have been concerned about the impact of ongoing stress and anxiety on children's social and emotional well-being. The media is filled with accounts of young people who, understandably, feel more anxious, sad, and lonely. More recently, uncertainty about the transition back to school has intensified these uncomfortable emotions for many children. With school back in session, whether in-person, virtual, or a hybrid model, in addition to all of their other responsibilities teachers will be grappling with helping students manage stress and worry.

It is inevitable that adults and children will be faced with some challenging emotions over the coming weeks: frustration, disappointment, fear, and more. Verbally acknowledging these negative feelings gives children the message that we can talk about difficult emotions and reassures them that adults are available to provide comfort and support (e.g., "It is so disappointing that so many clubs and activities have to meet virtually. I imagine you might feel both really sad and frustrated. This is really hard.")

While we want to give children the space to feel their negative emotions, it is also important to find the balance between acknowledging the uncomfortable feelings we are all experiencing during the pandemic and finding a sense of hope and optimism amidst the chaos. We know from research that individuals who experience deeply stressful situations have the best outcomes if they are able to maintain strong connections with others and share their experience with other people. That is what ThinkGive is hoping to provide for students and teachers this fall as it promotes strong connections between students, teachers, family, and community. It encourages students to build self-awareness and deepen their empathy, which can promote their emotional well-being.

By presenting a message of hope and optimism, we can strengthen the idea that we will get through this difficult time together.



Learning to cope with challenging circumstances will help children develop empathy for others who are facing difficult experiences. It will also help them build the resilience and confidence to know that they have the skills and abilities to survive whatever difficult situations may arise for them in the future.

My fervent hope is that on the other side of this pandemic, many children and adolescents will come away with the knowledge that they did something really difficult and survived.

