

Counsellor's Corner

Helping Children and Families find Resilience

In the midst of the Pandemic

"I'm afraid of spiders" whispered 7-year-old Caroline as she looked up to me with her big green eyes and an anxious look on her face and "I'm also afraid of Covid" as she snuggled into the big teddy bear that occupies a corner of my playroom wrapping herself in a cozy blanket. Caroline was no stranger to the challenges and changes of Covid-19 in her previous school year, having been in school, then remote learning, being separated from friends, and now returning to in person schooling again in September. She was well rehearsed in sanitizing her hands, when and where she would be wearing a mask, classroom distancing and even playground protocol changes. However, this time she just wasn't sure what to expect for the school year and she was worried. Covid-19 anxiety was real to her, heightening her already anxious concerns.



Deb Veuger, Child & Family Therapist

Research is already telling us that "With nationwide lockdowns and pandemic-related movement restrictions, children have spent indelible years of their lives away from family, friends, classrooms, play -key elements of childhood itself," said UNICEF's executive director, Henrietta Fore. "The impact is significant, and it is just the tip of the iceberg," Fore said. Thankfully the research also has shown that the risk to kids of severe illness from Covid-19 is relatively small but no one wants to be the parents of a child who gets devastatingly sick or suffers unknown after effects.

Most parents would love to return to the good old days of what we now would consider "common anxious feelings" for their kids starting back to school like "who will be my teacher"? "will my friends be in my class"? or "will I fit in"? We would welcome these anxious concerns because we can tell our children that it is normal to have these apprehensions and can help in the understanding that being scared is okay, instead of down playing their child's fears, or criticizing them for worrying. Fear and anxiety are the primary protective mechanisms and it helps us to stop and think about our actions, back away from dangers and run for our lives if necessary. Previously though hand sanitizing, masks and social distancing from friends and families, sometimes for months, weren't even a consideration.

"What anxiety wants is certainty and one of the mistakes we make as parents is that certainty then becomes out quest" says Lynn Lyons, a psychotherapist in Concord New Hampshire, who specializes in anxiety disorders and is the coauthor of Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents, 7 Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous and Independent Children.

The shift of thinking is that if we understand that worry and anxiety are a very powerful part of us that protects me when I need it, and as I learn about it, I'll have a better chance of controlling my feelings. If we encourage our children to share his or her fears we can then problem solve and cope with situations even being creative in the process. However, one of the pitfalls that we often run into is to give our kids reassurance that bad things won't happen in order to reduce their anxiety. We reassure them with "don't worry, everything will be fine"! But the truth is that uncertainty has always existed, Yes, Covid-19 is one of our highest stakes of anxiety right now, yet when has there ever been certainty for parents? I remember the first time my son drove away in his first car alone, my daughter's first sleep over, and when another son went skiing to the mountains with friends. This mother prayed many, many times, while smiling encouragingly at each new adventure. This doesn't mean that we bury our heads in the sand when it comes to Covid-19 but it does mean understanding that risk has always been an inherent part of life and that we trust God with our future including when we have children and in the midst of a pandemic. As parents, we must pay attention to our own behaviors. If you are anxious and fearful, if you are on the news channel 24/7 listening to the latest Covid updates and muttering under your breath or out loud that the world is going to hell in a handbasket, assuming the worst-case scenario, that's what your kids will think too. Children take cues from their parents so the more confidence and comfort that you can model, and with proper planning and precautions in place, your child will understand there is no reason to be afraid. It is an important time to acknowledge the challenges that Covid-19 has brought us and that we have the unique opportunity to discuss problem-solving, decision-making and reasonable assessment of risk and how we handle and trust God in each circumstances.

1 Peter 5:7, "casting all your cares (all your anxieties, all your worries and all your concerns, once and for all) on Him, for He cares about you (with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully)." Amplified Bible reminds us and reassures us that we are not alone in this pandemic.

Families that can be flexible and accept some degree of uncertainty will do better than those who are on a quest for certainty. It's important that we model resilience remembering that peace of mind doesn't come from masks, sanitizers or vaccines as nobody is immune to uncertainty but from the promises and wisdom that is found in God's word.

Isaiah 26: 3 reassures us that "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you". NIV

Helping people find hope, healing and peace in life

Fall 2021



"I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart."

John 14:27a

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At this time of year we are called to thanksgiving, to blessing the One who is worthy of praise and adoration. Blessing the Lord comes from our understanding of who God is and what He has done for us.

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children – with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works, everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul. Psalm 103 NIV



Ruby Stones. Executive Director

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