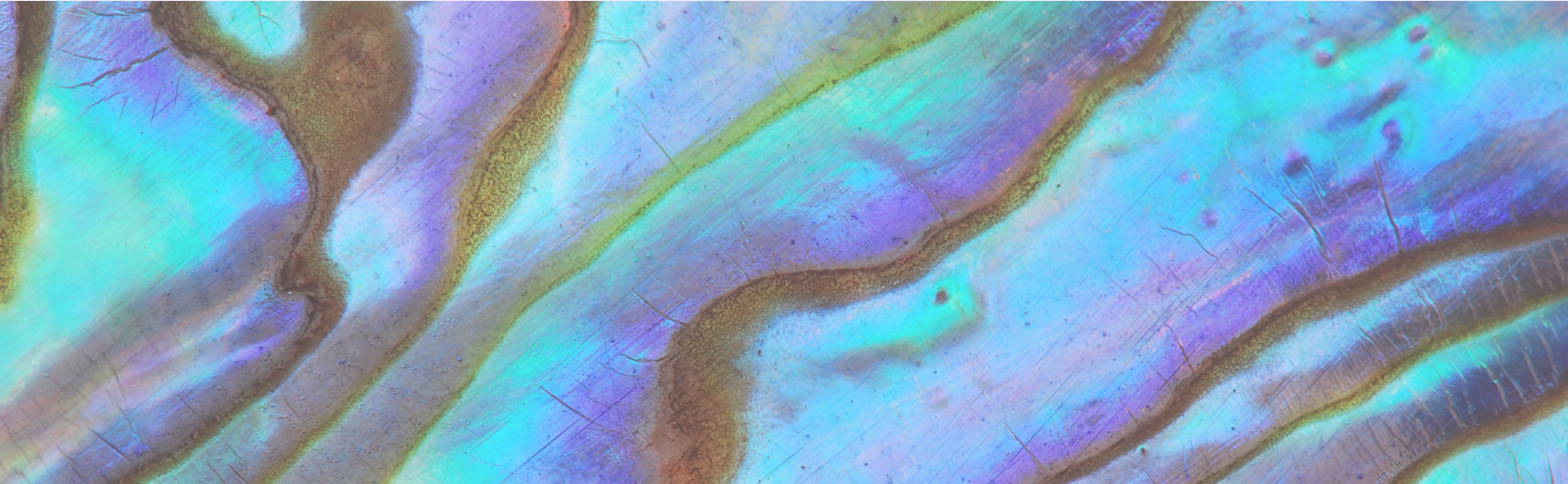


PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

for COVID-19 Frontline Workers in American Indian / Alaska Native Communities



ANNEX A

Advice for our relatives who serve as managers and supervisors to support staff and volunteers

As a manager or supervisor, you play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being, safety, and health of workers and/or volunteers. You can use the skills described throughout this guide to support staff or volunteers if they become distressed, and you can continue to build supportive work environments that promote employee health and well-being. Your service as a manager/supervisor is meaningful and important to community wellness.

IN THIS ANNEX

A. ADVICE FOR OUR RELATIVES WHO SERVE AS MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS TO SUPPORT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

B. BURNOUT AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

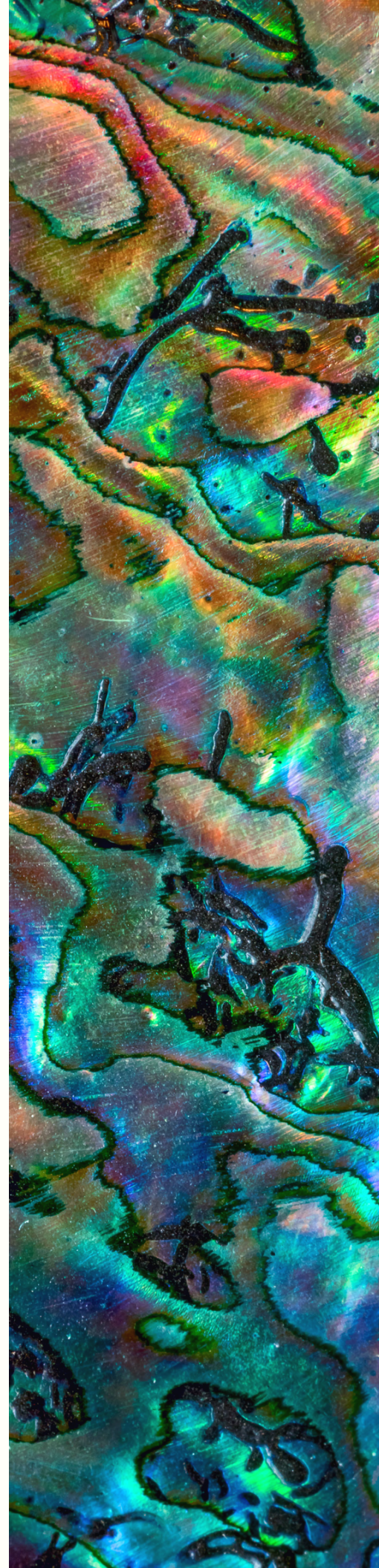
C. RELAXATION ACTIVITIES

D. SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

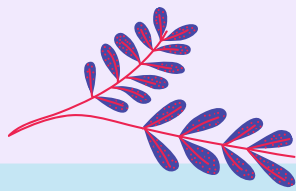
E. TRUSTED COVID-19 RESOURCES

To support staff and volunteers, you can

- Proactively encourage them to engage in **positive self-care** strategies and create an environment of **collective care** between teams.
- Lead by example through modeling **healthy work behaviors** (e.g., being kind to others).
- Prepare them by providing regular **training** for working in the COVID-19 response.
- Provide accurate, up-to-date, and easy-to-understand **information** on staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Create clear policies for return to work if someone is exposed to COVID-19, develops symptoms of COVID-19, or tests positive for COVID-19.
- Have regular meetings to discuss challenges, concerns, and solutions.
- Ensure that they have **regular breaks** and time to connect with family and friends.
- Implement a buddy system and encourage **peer support**.
- Provide information to all staff and volunteers on anonymous **mental health counseling and support** available to them. You can use the resource list developed on page 23 - 24 and the mental health resources on page 16.
- Be aware of staff and volunteers who may be in vulnerable situations that require **additional support**. Refer to module 4 for more resources and tips for supporting people who may need more support.
- Operate an **open-door policy** for staff and volunteers to report problems, preferably to someone who is not their direct supervisor.
- Work to **proactively** address conflicts by emphasizing the importance of a supportive team environment, and model kindness and compassion towards oneself and other team members.
- Incorporate brief self-care activities into work meetings to **create space** for self-care and demonstrate that it is a priority.



CASE EXAMPLE



SUPPORTING WORKERS ADAPTING TO A REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

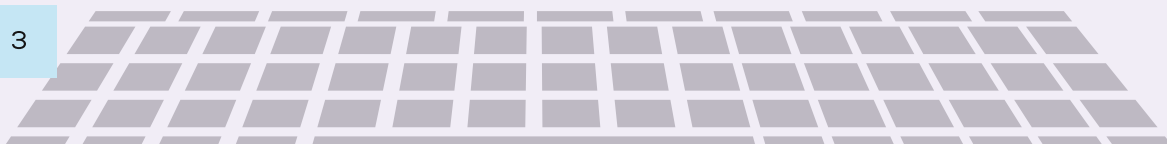
Tamara manages a small team of community health representatives (CHRs) at an Urban Indian Health Program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone is working remotely. To support them, Tamara arranges daily check-in calls with the team. These regular check-ins help Tamara assess how everyone is doing, discuss any concerns they share, and provide up-to-date guidance and information on COVID-19. Tamara encourages the team of CHRs to organize safe social gatherings via videoconferencing, without her present, to help them relax, connect, and build a team environment. She also shares information for counseling services available to help support them in case her team would like additional support. To help her staff feel appreciated and motivated, Tamara sends weekly emails thanking the team for their hard work and letting them know they are appreciated and valued by the community.



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Joelle Joyner

Additional resources for managers and supervisors:

- Staying Resilient During a Pandemic (Headington Institute): <https://www.headington-institute.org/resources/covid-19/>
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Staff, Volunteers and Communities in an Outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (IFRC): <https://bit.ly/2XIAC7t>
- COVID-19 Information for Employers (UIHI): <https://www.uihi.org/resources/covid-19-information-for-employers/>
- Healthcare Personnel and First Responders: How to Cope with Stress and Build Resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/mental-health-healthcare.html>



ANNEX B

Burnout and compassion fatigue

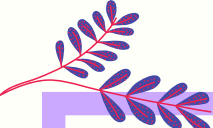
BURNOUT

Burnout is defined as experiencing exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased effectiveness at work that can impact other areas of life. Burnout is not a disorder or diagnosis, but it can affect your physical (e.g., chronic fatigue, headaches) and/or mental health (e.g., feeling sadness or anger).

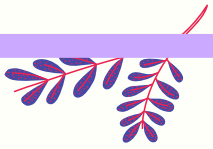
Work-related burnout can result from many different factors, including:

- **Workload:** Too much work or work that seems to continue without breaks to rest.
- **Lack of control:** An inability to control decisions that affect your job, such as policies related to returning to work or working remotely.
- **Reward:** Inadequate recognition or reward may increase vulnerability to burnout by devaluing workers and their work.
- **Community:** Workplace community includes relationships among employees and trust. When conflict or lack of trust is present, it can contribute to burnout.
- **Fairness:** Cynicism, anger, and hostility are likely to arise when people feel they are not being treated fairly.
- **Values:** When personal and organizational values do not align well, employees are at greater risk for burnout.





Burnout can have serious consequences because it can negatively impact commitment to the organization and the quality of care that people offer, leading to risks for the safety of yourself and those around you. Even if you are not personally experiencing burnout, you can help prevent or recognize job burnout among others.



Here are some ways to help take action against job burnout:

- **Evaluate** what options you have: If you are comfortable, discuss specific concerns with your supervisor(s) and work together to adjust expectations and find solutions. Try to set goals for which tasks need to be prioritized and which tasks can wait.
- **Get Support:** Reach out and seek support from co-workers, family or friends outside of work, or employee support programs within your organization.
- **Try a relaxing activity:** Try some of the activities suggested in Annex C such as going for a walk, doing some yoga, or practicing a breathing exercise.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Mindfulness involves being deeply aware of what you are sensing and feeling without interpretation or judgment. At work, this may mean approaching situations with an open and patient mind. It is important to take some time to check-in with how you are feeling.

COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion fatigue occurs among those in professions where they're helping others who are experiencing others' physical, emotional, or spiritual pain. Compassion fatigue can cause someone to feel extreme stress, exhaustion, and feel numb or less empathy towards others they're working with. If you are consistently feeling numb and less able to feel emotions when working with someone, exhausted, feeling guilty, powerless, or feeling as if you're not able to effectively contribute during your job, you may be experiencing compassion fatigue.

Many become frontline workers because of their care and compassion for others, but during a crisis like the pandemic, these feelings of empathy may become overwhelming and lead to compassion fatigue, which is more serious than general work-related burnout. Compassion fatigue is a common occurrence among health care workers, especially during a crisis like the pandemic.

If you experience the following, you may be dealing with compassion fatigue:

- Feelings of failure, guilt, self-doubt, or sadness
- Changes in sleep pattern
- Reduced sense of efficacy on the job (e.g., feeling as if you have nothing left to give)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed by obligations
- Apathy and emotional numbness
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Emotional or physical exhaustion
- Pessimism

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize that you are experiencing compassion fatigue, so it is important to connect with support from family members, friends, or colleagues to help maintain your well-being. Fortunately, compassion fatigue is manageable and preventable.

Consider trying some of the options below if you are experiencing compassion fatigue:

- **Practice self-care:** See page 11 of module 1 for ideas on how to care for yourself.
- **Cultivate health relationships outside of work:** Just as it is important to have strong relationships with your co-workers and other frontline workers who understand what you are going through, it is also essential to maintain supportive friendships and connections outside of work. Sometimes connecting with friends who do not understand what your job is like first-hand can provide emotional relief from thinking about work.
- **Identify and use workplace strategies:** Every workplace offers different options to support its employees. Consider asking your supervisor or co-workers if there are any opportunities such as workplace support groups, regular check-ins with supervisors, mental health days, or access to counseling.
- **Practice self-compassion.** There are several ways to practice self-compassion, including keeping a journal that you write both difficult moments of your day and practice kindness towards yourself, or listening to exercises to promote compassion and kindness towards yourself.



RESOURCES TO PROMOTE SELF-COMPASSION:

[FIVE-MINUTE SELF-COMPASSION BREAK:](#)

[SELF-COMPASSION EXERCISES:](#)

If you or someone you know is experiencing extreme distress, consider seeking professional support.

ANNEX C PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Here is a script to carry out progressive muscular relaxation. You can use this exercise for yourself as one of your self-care strategies, and you may also be able to offer it to others, such as people you may be helping. If you use it with others, remember to keep a calming tone of voice as you give the instructions below and speak slowly, allowing ample time for people to experience the full effect of relaxation. Alternatively, listen to a [guided recording](#) of a progressive muscle relaxation exercise.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation script

As we breathe, we will do some progressive muscle relaxation so that you can feel the difference between tension and relaxation in your muscles. We are not often aware when we hold tension in our bodies. These exercises will make us more aware and give us a way to release the tension.

Close your eyes and sit straight in your chair. Place your feet on the floor and feel the ground under your feet. Relax your hands in your lap. As you breathe in, I will ask you to tense and tighten certain muscles in your body. As you tense and hold the muscles, you will hold your breath for a count of three, then relax them completely when I tell you to breathe out. Let's begin with our toes...

Lead the person through progressive muscle relaxation SLOWLY. Ask them to tense a part of their body and to inhale and hold their breath while you count aloud slowly, like this: *Inhale and hold your breath, 1 --- 2 ---3*. Then say: *Exhale and relax*. Give a slight rise to your voice as you say: *Inhale and hold your breath and bring your voice down as you say: Exhale and relax*.

Have the person tense and relax their muscles in this order:

- Curl your toes tightly and hold the tension strongly.
- Tense your thigh and leg muscles.
- Tense your belly, holding it in.
- Make fists of your hands.
- Tense your arms by bending at the elbows and bringing your arms tight alongside your upper body.
- Shrug your shoulders up to your ears.
- Tense all your facial muscles.

After they have exhaled and relaxed each part of their body, say:

...Now feel your [toes, thighs, face/forehead, etc.] relax. Breathe normally. Feel the blood come into your [toes, thighs, etc.]. Now, drop your chin slowly toward your chest. As you inhale, slowly and carefully rotate your head in a circle to the right, exhale as you bring your head around to the left and back toward your chest. Inhale to the right and back ... exhale to the left and down. Inhale to the right and back ... exhale to the left and down. Now, reverse directions ... inhale to the left and back, exhale to the right and down (repeat twice). Now bring your head up to the center. Notice the calm in your mind and body.

Taking care of yourself is important, try to work this exercise into your daily routine if it helps you. Be sure to be gentle with yourself and grant yourself grace if you are unable to practice this everyday.



4-7-1 BREATHING

Instructions:

To practice 4-7-8 breathing, find a place to sit or lie down comfortably. Sit with your back straight when you're new to this exercise and learning.

Prepare for the practice by resting the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, right behind your top front teeth. You will need to keep your tongue in place throughout the practice. It takes practice to keep from moving your tongue when you exhale. Exhaling during 4-7-8 breathing can be easier for some people when they purse their lips.

The following steps should all be carried out in the cycle of one breath:

1. First, let your lips part. Make a whooshing sound, exhaling completely through your mouth.
2. Next, close your lips, inhaling silently through your nose as you count to four in your head.
3. Then, for seven seconds, hold your breath.
4. Make another whooshing exhale from your mouth for eight seconds or as slow as you possibly can.

When you inhale again, you initiate a new cycle of breath. Practice this pattern for four full breaths. The held breath (for seven seconds) is the most critical part of this practice. It is also recommended that you only practice 4-7-8 breathing for four breaths when you are first starting out. You can gradually work your way up to eight full breaths.

Resources and audio can be found [here](#) for this breathing exercise.

BELLY BREATHING

Belly breathing is easy to do and very relaxing. Try this basic exercise anytime you need to relax or relieve stress.

1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.

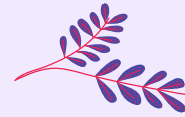
As you practice this exercise, you can also try imagining and connecting to the deep breathing you may practice in ceremony or singing. Perhaps you can do this while breathing in the smell of crisp morning air or with a fragrant candle burning inside.

Learn more about belly breathing [here](#).

Listen to guided relaxation and breathing exercises [here](#).



BREATHING EXERCISES FOR CHILDREN



Sometimes using props can be helpful to teach children deep breathing techniques.

- **Bubbles:** Use bubbles to teach children to blow out their breath slowly.
- **Stuffed animals:** Have your child lay down on their back and place a stuffed animal on their belly. Help them notice how when they breathe in the stuffed animal moves up, and as they blow their breath out the animal will move down. This teaches children to use their belly to take deep breaths.

Using children's imagination can help them to find comfort in breathing exercises.

- **Flower breath:** Tell your child to imagine smelling a flower. Breathe in slowly through the nose and out through the mouth.
- **Bunny breath:** Instruct your child to imagine they are a bunny. Take three quick sniffs in through your nose and then one long exhale through the nose. As they get better, have the child focus on making the exhale slower and slower.
- **Snake breath:** Have your child slowly inhale through the nose and breathe out through the mouth with a slow hissing sound.
- **Blow out the candle:** Have your child imagine a birthday candle in front of them. Have them take a deep breath through the nose and then exhale through the mouth to blow out the candle.
- **Balloon breathing:** Instruct your child to imagine that their stomach is a balloon. As they breathe in, tell them to fill their belly like it is a balloon. As they breathe out imagine that they are letting air out of the balloon.

It may also be helpful to have your child follow along with an instructional video.

Here are some examples of videos that may be helpful to you and your child:

[Balloon Breaths/Belly Breaths](#)
[Kids Meditation- Square Breathing](#)
[4-7-8 Breathing for children](#)

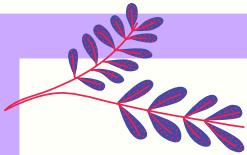


ANNEX D: SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Whether you are a parent or caregiver to children or interacting with them in your role as a frontline worker, the following tips and resources can help you support children.

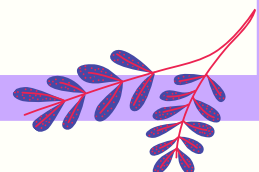
Talking with children

Children may be overwhelmed, stressed, or frightened by what they hear about the COVID-19 pandemic. They may have difficulty understanding what the pandemic is and have a hard time coping with the numerous changes to their lives (e.g., school attendance, in-person celebrations, seeing family and friends, spending more time at home, wearing masks). Further, they may experience challenges with naming and coping with difficult emotions as a result of these changes. Parents, caregivers, and other adults can help children better understand the pandemic in a way that is honest and reduces anxiety and fear.



Tips for talking with children:

- Remain calm and reassuring.
- Be available to listen and talk. Be sure to provide facts when possible. Be comfortable saying “I don’t know” when you do not have an answer and find the answer together.
- Pay attention to what information children may be consuming through television, radio, or online. Be sure to point them to age-appropriate resources.
- Watch for changes in behavior that may be due to increased anxiety or inability to cope with current circumstances (e.g., trouble sleeping, complaining about headaches or not feeling well, seeming to be clingy or often distracted).
- Give them some control by telling them what they can do to reduce the spread of germs and keep themselves and others safe.
- Be a good role model, let them know it is normal to feel worried or stressed sometimes. Share with them how you deal with stress in healthy ways.



POSITIVE PARENTING DURING COVID-19:

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, parents and caregivers may need to manage and cope with their own anxiety and stress in addition to taking care of children's stress. Below are some tips for helping parents manage all of these stressors.

Reducing stress for parents and caregivers:

- **Take it easy on yourself**, you are doing the best you can. Remember to be forgiving of yourself and others. No one can do it all, all of the time.
- **Know that you are not alone**, your friends, family and friends are adapting to changes in their children's schedules. Take time to call or video chat with your relatives in similar situations.
- **It is okay to take a break!** Take time to relax and check in with yourself and practice self-care strategies you enjoy (e.g., listen to music, practice a relaxation exercise, practice beadwork or weaving, draw/paint, or go for a walk/run).

Reducing stress for children:

- **Be honest** with them about COVID-19 and help look up answers if you are unsure. Let children know it is OK to ask questions and answer all questions truthfully using age-appropriate language.
- **Reassure** them that they are safe and validate any emotions they may be experiencing (e.g., "It's okay to feel sad").
- **Teach** them about keeping a safe distance and proper handwashing.
- **Help** them connect with friends and family through phone, video call, sending letters, or at a safe physical distance while outside.
- **Correct and redirect** children without losing your temper, pause, and take a step back if you begin feeling frustrated.
- **Practice a relaxation activity**, talk about a tribal teaching that can help your child cope with this challenging time, or practice a tribal or spiritual tradition together (e.g., smudging, saying a prayer).

GRIEF AND CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

Many children are facing sudden losses and drastic changes in their normal lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes may include loss of in-person schooling, time with friends being cancelled, or relatives getting sick or passing away. These feelings of loss, change, and fear can be very challenging for children, but you can help support a healthy grieving process

How to recognize grief in children

Everyone grieves differently. Children are no exception, and their responses and experiences with grief will vary depending on their developmental stage and context. The range of common reactions to grief among children of all ages includes:

- Irregular or disrupted sleep, including nightmares
- Physical discomfort (e.g., stomach aches, headaches, or body pain)
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Changes in eating habits (e.g., eating more or less than usual)
- General anxiety and fear, specifically related to something bad happening, including worry about safety of self and others
- Increased sensitivity to external stimuli (e.g., light, noise, movement)
- A wide range of emotions, sometimes intense, including rage, guilt, sadness, relief, worry, or revenge
- Behavior changes such as changes in energy level, hitting or kicking, or withdrawing from social situations

Younger children may also experience some of these reactions to grief:

- Clingy or need to be held
- Irritability and temper tantrums
- Asking repetitive or detailed questions about what happened/death and dying
- Regressive behaviors (e.g., needing help with tasks they have already learned)
- Repeating the story of loss to anyone, including strangers, or using play and talk to recreate the event

Older children such as teens and young adults may also experience some of these reactions to grief:

- Increased risk taking (e.g., using substances, unsafe behaviors, or reckless driving)
- Uncomfortable discussing death or experiences with parents/caregivers
- Confusion over family roles and identities
- Attempting to take on a caregiving role with younger siblings
- Thoughts of suicide or self-harm (national suicide prevention lifeline: 800-273-8255)

Learn more about children's responses and experiences with grief [here](#).

SUPPORTING A GRIEVING CHILD OR TEEN

Grief is a difficult experience, especially for children. There are many strategies for supporting a grieving child.

- **Listen to the child.** It is important for a child to have a safe space to talk and share their feelings. Be patient and understanding. Truthfully answer their questions.
- **Allow the child to show emotion.** Children may experience anger, sadness, pain, shame, guilt, or other powerful emotions. These are all normal during grief.
- **Encourage coping skills.** Support the child by helping them find healthy ways to cope with their feelings. Try out different activities as a family: deep breathing, praying, journaling, going for walks, arts and crafts, etc.
- **Practice self-care.** Caregivers must take care of themselves in order to support their children to the best of their abilities. Be authentic with your child. Sharing your emotions and how you are taking care of yourself will help them feel less alone and give them ideas to do the same.
- **Understand feelings and emotions about the loss come and go.** During grief, children will have good days and bad days. Understand that this is normal, and practice compassion during the bad days.
- **Create and maintain routines.** Children need routines to feel supported and comforted during their grieving process.
- **Ask for help.** Rely on family and friends for support. Encourage the child to reach out to their friends or a trusted adult for support. If these steps are not enough, consider contacting a mental health professional or traditional healer.
- **Make new memories.** This can remind the child that it is okay to be happy and sad at the same time.

Additional resources to support children, youth, and their caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- [Talking to kids about COVID-19 \(JH CAIH\)](#)
- [Positive parenting during COVID-19 \(JH CAIH\)](#)
- [Children and grief during COVID-19 \(JH CAIH\)](#)
- [Keep children healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic \(CDC\)](#)
- [“Our Smallest Warriors, Our Strongest Medicine: Overcoming COVID-19” \(JH CAIH\)](#), an Indigenous children’s storybook about COVID-19 with additional parent resources and children’s activities
- [National Alliance for Grieving Children](#)
- [Supporting children through grief during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-422-4453
- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990

ANNEX E:

Trusted COVID-19 Resources

Knowing how to find credible information is important so you can point community members in the right direction. Here are some important resources and how to access them:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing](#)
- [How COVID-19 Spreads](#)
- [Prevent getting sick](#)
- [If you are sick with COVID-19 or caring for someone who is ill with COVID-19](#)
- [Daily Activities and Going Out](#)
- [Pets and COVID-19](#)

Indian Health Service:

- [COVID-19 Cases by Indian Health Service Region](#)
- [Indian Health Service COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [Indian Health Service Vaccine Plans](#)
- [Federal Response in Indian Country](#)

Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health:

- [Resources for Tribal Leaders, Community Members, and Healthcare workers](#)

Urban Indian Health Institute:

- [COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Specific COVID-19 resources \(including talking about COVID-19 with teenagers, COVID-19 information for providers and healthcare personnel\)](#)

