

# Striving to Thrive in 2020: Middle & High School Parent Handout

## Find the Middle Ground: We can do hard things!

- If we set our expectations too low, we risk fragilizing our children by assuming they can't do things.
- But if our expectations are too strict (expecting kids to do everything all at once the way they did before the pandemic), this may feel invalidating and set them up for failure.
- The goal is to find the middle ground where we can validate their experiences and emotions while fostering a sense of resilience. We can do hard things!

## Step 1: Check in with your child:

### Acknowledge

- This is a tough time
- School might feel really different right now.
- That there is so much uncertainty.

### Normalize

- It's okay to have different reactions, emotions and stress along the way.

### Instill hope

- We are in this together!
- We can support each other.

### Praise

- Thanks for letting me know how you are feeling.
- Thanks for sharing your concerns about school/home/ friends.

## Step 2: Help your child reconnect with their values (i.e., prioritize their apps and notifications)

### 1. Help your teen identify their strengths and values

- This year, our "apps" are probably very disorganized - making it difficult to focus on what really matters.

- To help your teens prioritize what they care about, you can start by checking in with them – asking “what are you feeling concerned about right now?”
- Then try to align those concerns to what your teen values. What values are behind those concerns they have shared?
- By helping your teen make the connection between their concerns and their values, you are helping them begin to organize their thoughts, shift their attention, and prioritize what they care about so they can act in ways that are consistent with the person they want to be.

## **2. Focus on what you can control**

- Try to help your child identify the things that matter to them and the things that are in their control – and most importantly, where those two categories overlap – the things they value that they also have control over.
- Now encourage your child to take action on these things they care about and can control.

## **Step 3: Help your child hit the reset button:**

1. Notice that your child needs help regulating their emotions
2. Provide Validation:
  - Make eye contact
  - Reflect back what your child is saying without judgment and without making interpretations
  - Examples of Validating Statements
    - “That’s got to be so [difficult, upsetting, scary, frustrating, etc.] for you.”
    - “I imagine that must have been hard for you.”
    - “I can see how hard you are working.”
    - “Wow, (she/he/they) must have made you feel really angry/sad, etc.”
    - “I can see this is important to you.”
    - “What a frustrating situation to be in.”
3. Ask “How can I help?”
  - You can offer a few options:
  - “I can listen and validate your feelings.”
  - “I can help you problem solve.”
  - “I can go away and let you handle it.”
4. Prompt your child to use a coping skill:
  - ACCEPTS: ACCEPTS involves using distraction to turn your attention away from the highly distressing situation to something else.

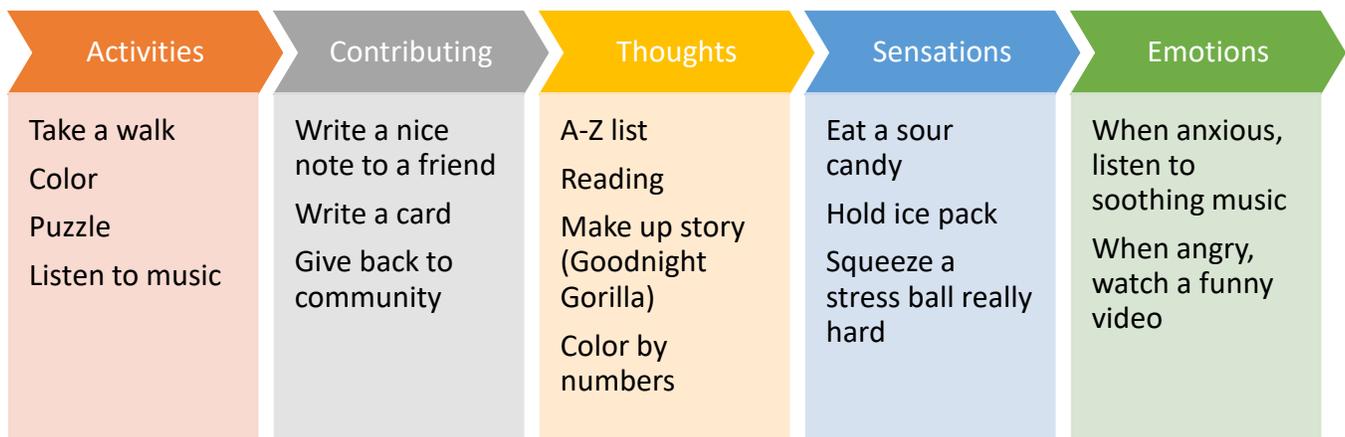
- Grounding: These skills involve deliberately turning attention away from the distressing situation or related negative thoughts and instead noticing the present moment.

5. Encourage values-based approach behavior

- Now that your child has used a coping skill to manage their strong emotions, help them take a step in the direction of their values. No, we may not be able to do a lot of things that are important to you right now, but what are some things we *\*can\** still do that are meaningful and consistent with your values?
- For example, approach could be participating more in virtual learning days, asking the teacher for help, or reaching out to a friend.
- The things we want our children to approach may be hard for them, but avoiding hard things isn't going to make things easier in the long run.

6. Praise

ACCEPTS examples:



Grounding Examples:

Skill	Instruction
<b>54321 Senses</b>	Identify five things you see in the room, four things you hear, three things you touch, two things you smell, one thing you taste.
<b>54321 Colors</b>	Identify five red objects in the room, four blue objects, three yellow objects, etc. Pick any set of five colors that works for you.

## How you might apply these strategies:

1. My child doesn't want to engage in virtual learning: in the moment coaching
  - (Be kind to yourself – we are all doing our best)
  - Check-in: what's making it hard?
  - Validate
  - Ask how you can help
  - Prompt coping skill use (ACCEPTS, Grounding) in moment of distress
  - Praise
  - Return to expectation