

# UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## Student Support: Self Care Social Emotional Health and Wellness Guide

### Becoming aware of our mental health

Taking care of your emotional health will help you think more clearly, improve your relationships, boost creativity, and cope with adversity.

When you take time to care for yourself, you can:

- Lower stress levels
- Have a more positive outlook
- Improve your sleep habits
- Improve your physical health
- Have the energy to understand and help others

### Indicators you may be struggling with a mental health issue

While it may be normal to experience some of these signs occasionally, you should be concerned if you notice any of these are keeping you from doing your day-to-day tasks/activities.

- Worrying all day long (or more than 80 percent of your day)
- Feeling like your heart is racing, breathing difficulties that come on suddenly
- Feeling restless, racing thoughts
- Uneasy stomach
- Sleeping too much (more than your normal) or not able to sleep (insomnia)
- Sudden changes in mood (i.e., anger outburst, crying)
- Losing interest in things you normally like to do
- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Decreased appetite or change in eating patterns
- Withdrawing from social settings, family, and/or friends
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Making statements about wanting to harm or kill oneself

### Care Tips

**MAINTAIN A DAILY ROUTINE...** in the morning (with breakfast) and evening (with a consistent and reasonable bedtime).

**STAY CONNECTED TO OTHERS** Be creative with socially distance activities where you can talk face-to-face with people, like Facetime, Zoom, etc. to maintain healthy relationships.

**PRACTICE GRATITUDE** Write down 3-5 specific things you are grateful for each day – try to be specific.

**ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** Go for a walk, dance to your favorite song, practice yoga.

**TAKE TECHNOLOGY BREAKS THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

Step away from your phone and/or computer.

**BE KIND TO YOURSELF** Remember that nobody is perfect or happy all the time. It is okay not to be okay.

**SPREAD KINDNESS** Send a kind email or text, help a neighbor shovel snow, etc.

### Resources

- Macomb County Community Mental Health (Mental Health Services & Resources) [www.mccmh.net](http://www.mccmh.net) or 855-996-2264
- Macomb County Health Department (Health Services and Resources) [Health.macombgov.org](http://Health.macombgov.org) or 586-469-5235
- Macomb County Crisis Line 24/7 (Crisis Counseling & Resources) 586-307-9100 or 1-800-442-HOPE (1-800-442-4673)

### Self-Care Strategies

**IDENTIFY YOUR STRESSORS** Consider what behaviors or situations bother you so that you can plan what to do when they happen.

Acknowledge your feelings. Allow yourself to feel them. Recognize what is happening inside of you: rapid heartbeat, feeling sweaty, fast breathing, upset stomach, and muscle tension. Figure out which symptom typically comes first so that you can activate your self-care plan sooner rather than later. Use a 1-10 scale. If you start your plan when you are at a 5, rather than a 10, it is going to be a lot easier to calm down and make better choices.

**TIME OUT AND TAKE FIVE** If you are feeling overwhelmed, take a timeout. Take a break from whatever is stressing you out and then return to it later. What calms you down may be different from someone else. Do not feel a need to conform. Experiment with what might be successful for you. Is it exercising? Deep breathing? Listening to music? Taking a shower or bath? Reading? Going for a walk? Whatever it may be, it is important to do something for yourself by separating from a negative situation, even if it's for 5 minutes.

**CALL A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER** Talk to someone who is reassuring to you. Reach out to others. You are never alone. You never know who else can relate to something you are going through or if they have faced some of the same challenges as you. It may be calming to describe what is bothering you and to get it off your chest. Having this type of support system is important. Physical distancing does not mean we need to be socially isolated.

**POSITIVE SELF-TALK** Turn away from destructive behaviors and thoughts. Treat yourself with love. Give yourself a pep talk. "I'm doing the best I can." "I got this." Focus on what you can control. Do not compare yourself to others. "This too shall pass." "I am worth it." "I CHOOSE happiness."

**LAUGH** During times of stress, it can feel like a struggle to find joy. It may even feel inappropriate or insensitive to have fun while we are also experiencing losses. But laughter can improve your mood, relieve stress, and help your body and mind relax.

**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS** Mindfulness practice can help you be more present. It is focusing on what is happening now and taking in that moment, rather than replaying what happened in the past in your mind or worrying about something in the future. Mindfulness is about the now and noticing the moment you are in. It is recognizing the thoughts that come into your head without criticizing yourself for having them.

Example: Stop. Notice five things you can see, hear, feel, or smell. Say each of them out loud.



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