

Hi Families,

I wanted to reach out as the school counselor for Leonard Elementary and E.E. Knight to offer my support. If your student would like to talk to me, please reach out via email. My email address is [amber.johnson@ovidelsie.org](mailto:amber.johnson@ovidelsie.org). From there we can decide if your student would benefit from an electronic resource or a phone/video meeting. Additionally, if you are in need of any resources, please reach out and I will do my best to assist you in finding organizations that may help with your needs.

I also wanted to provide a link to a resource that addresses Coronavirus in a child-friendly way and explains techniques that children can implement to try to decrease worried thoughts and feelings. That resource can be found at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x3eApRJDPdVxpOlq1eEU124oIWpfQDK1/view>.

I often work with students in order to help them develop coping skills and I think that is extremely important during this time. I often teach students deep breathing first because it's so easy to do and can be done anywhere without any special equipment. This technique is also scientifically proven to be an effective calming technique. The key to deep breathing is to breathe in and out slowly and deeply. I often explain to students that if you think of a balloon, when you blow air into it, it expands. When practicing deep breathing, your stomach should go out when you breathe in, just like a balloon filling with air. Next, when you breathe out, just like letting air out of a balloon, your stomach should go back down. It's the opposite of how our stomach normally reacts to our breathing, which makes breathing this way more intentional. I recommend that students practice this type of breathing for at least two minutes. Before bed is the perfect time to practice since it is a natural time for our bodies to attempt to calm and relax. Parents can always practice this technique with their children. In addition, your child may already use "coping strategies" they didn't even realize they were using. For instance, going for a walk, building with blocks or Legos, listening to music, etc. can all be coping strategies when they are being used to mitigate feelings of stress/anxiety.

Please know that feeling stressed and anxious is absolutely normal during this time and other times of uncertainty. We just have to do our best, one day at a time, and remember that things won't always be this way. I hope each family is doing well and please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

Amber Johnson, LLMSW – Clinical  
School Counselor  
Leonard Elementary/E.E. Knight Elementary