

To our Catholic School Community,

Nine months into the pandemic and life has certainly changed. As we embrace this holiday season, we are well aware that this year will be different. While the Christmas season is filled with joy, it is also common for the holidays to increase stress.

This year, families are struggling with many issues: financial stress, loss of loved one, coping with illness and just managing day to day in the new reality. COVID has changed how we interact in the world and it will certainly impact how we gather and celebrate.

It is important to monitor your mental health and wellness and the mental wellness of your children, family and friends. Below are some tips and resources:

**Be sure to find ways to celebrate with your family.**

- Have honest conversations with your child(ren) about why.
- Plan activities that honor traditions. Find ways to connect with others.
- These resources can provide some ideas: [Supporting Children and Teens during this Holiday Season](#) and [Preparing for the Holidays during Covid-19](#)

**Monitor you own health and wellness and invest in self-care.**

- Turn off the news. Shut off the phone.
- Do what is needed to take care of yourself. Children take their cues from the adults around them. It is important to model healthy coping.
- Look at this for some ideas: [Taking Care of Yourself](#)

**Check in on loved ones.** The reason navigating life during the pandemic is exhausting is because it is! It is normal to feel sad and frustrated at times.

- It is important to monitor anyone with depression, anxiety or mental health struggles and to monitor your family.
- Some advice on how to start a conversation with someone you are worried about can be found here: [Family Conversations](#) as well as tips for monitoring behaviors of children at home - [Helping at Home-Tips for Parents](#).

**Monitor for symptoms of distress.**

- If you think you, your child(ren), or a family member is experiencing a mental health crisis, see the following resources for signs and symptoms: [Warning Signs and Symptoms](#) and [Children's Mental Health](#).

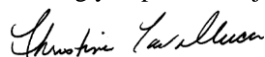
**Reach out for help.** It's okay to ask for support. There are many remote resources available.

- Begin with your medical doctor or the pediatrician to rule out medical issues.
- Ask for referrals for a mental health professional. Most health insurance plans include behavioral health resources.
- Explore [NY Project Hope](#) a program of the NYS Office of Mental Health that offers an Emotional Support Helpline, 1-844-863-9314, 7 days a week from 8am-10pm.
- As noted in a previous communication, ADAPP offers a brief mental health phone consultation and support to parents who have concerns about their child(ren) and will refer them, as appropriate, to additional resources. To participate in this program, please email: [MentalHealthSupport@adapp.org](mailto:MentalHealthSupport@adapp.org), with the name of the school your child attends, their grade, and the city in which the school is located in the subject line. Please describe your concern so the counselor can be prepared to respond, and leave a phone number if you would like a call back. Every attempt will be made to respond within 24 hours, Monday –Friday, during the hours of 8 am to 4 pm.
- **\*\*If you have a mental health emergency, please call 911\*\***
- In addition, we know that there are other challenges that face our families, if you have questions about state and local benefit programs or other community resources, you can send an email to [FamilySupport@adapp.org](mailto:FamilySupport@adapp.org).

**Continue to take advantage of the many resources available online.**

- Many wonderful resources are posted on the [Catholic Schools-Covid-19](#) page as well as [ADAPP's Covid-19](#) resource page. They are updated regularly and provide information about education, remote learning, family activities, and mental health and wellness techniques.

Wishing you peace and joy this Christmas,



Christine Cavallucci, LCSW, CPP  
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