

Improving the Emotional Well-Being of Latinx Students Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic: Tips for School Personnel and Caregivers

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Many Latinx students have experienced psychosocial stressors during the COVID-19 (CV) pandemic, resulting in anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and higher rates of externalizing behaviors than their counterparts (Smitherman, Golden, & Walton, 2021). Many of them have lost a family member and had limited or no interactions among peers, and lack family members to rely on for their care. Also, many faced disruptions of school mental health services due to school closures. Caregivers faced job loss; housing and food instability; experienced homelessness; and reduced or no access to mental health and health care services, among other challenges. These challenges may contribute to an increase in emotional stress among children and caregivers.

Effects of Social Isolation Caused by the Pandemic

- Social distancing could lead to social isolation (Wang et al., 2017).
- For Latinx students, disconnection from families, schools, and communities resulted in increased stress and anxiety levels (Loades et al., 2020).
- The CV pandemic has significantly disrupted social, community, and educational contexts, which are particularly important for the well-being of Latinx adolescents (Held, Jones, & Forrest-Bank, 2020).

Emotional Effects of the CV Pandemic on Latinx Students

- The emotional consequences of social distancing include feelings of fear, sadness, anger, and worry.
- Behavioral manifestations are usually the most common and easily to identify symptoms among children.
- Warning signs include changing eating habits, constant bad humor, isolation, lack of energy, low tolerance, negative or pessimistic expressions, and mood changes.
- Pre-existing mental disorders, prior traumatic experiences or abuse, family instability, or losing a loved one could increase these behaviors.

Tips to Improve the Emotional Well-Being of Latinx Students

- Explore if their basic needs are being met.
- Identify support services in the area.
- Ask about their support systems, such as family, friends, school, and community members.
- Identify and recognize your emotions as caregivers or school personnel.
- Help students understand how they feel, and let them know that it is okay to share their feelings.
- Observe changes in their emotional and behavioral responses.
- Listen and validate their emotions. Do not assume what they are feeling or thinking.
- Teach them the technique of Stop, Think, and then Act.
- Help them to identify coping behaviors, such as reading.
- Refer students to mental health services as needed.

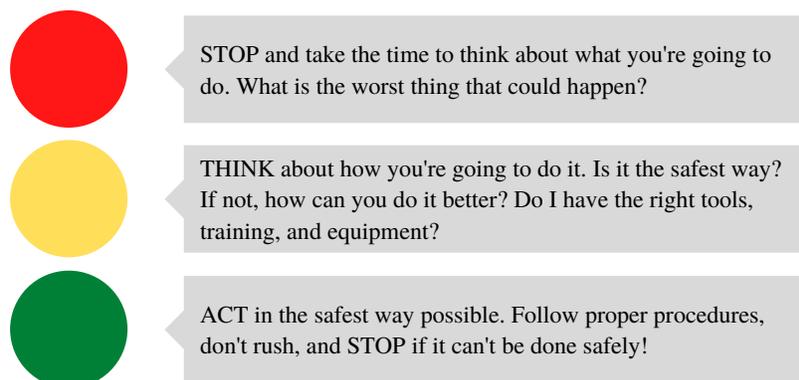


Figure 1: Stop, Think, Act Technique

Disclaimer: The National Hispanic and Latino MHTTC recognize the complexities associated with gender and ethnic identification. With the intention of both facilitating a fluent reading of the text and supporting an inclusive and respectful language, this document uses gender-neutral language and terms that reflect diverse identities. In this document, Latinx is used for people of Latin American origin or descent as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative.

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