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### YOU ARE NOT ALONE – COPING STRATEGIES FROM A PTA LEADER

*In this article, Chrissy Fitch, President of Fifth District PTA, shares coping strategies she has learned (mostly by trial and error) to help keep her family calm and reassured during the coronavirus pandemic.*



“How are things going for you guys?” seems to be the first question on everyone’s lips.

I hear it from my friends, from my students’ teachers when they are on Zoom meetings, and from my husband as he talks with his cousin who is a mail carrier and to those we are caring for, like my in-laws.

It’s a loaded question. Should I be honest and tell you how I’m really doing? Well, it depends on the day actually. Today, I’m good! Feeling confident and accomplished as I cross things off my to-do list. But yesterday...that was different. One of my four (yes four) high school students with anxiety disorders asked how cheerleader tryouts were going to happen, and if they would have Senior Night next year. Another one I have to drag out of bed at 2:00 p.m., reminding her we are still human and need to function as much as possible!

One thing that works in my household is finding a routine for each person. We have a loose schedule. Everyone needs to be up and functioning (breakfast, teeth brushed, bed made, room tidied) by 9:00 a.m. The kids have to attend all scheduled meetings with their teachers. This is good for both the kids and their teachers, as it brings a sense of normalcy. Everyone in my house also has to do something physical, spiritual, academic, artistic, and kind, and do chores, EVERY DAY. At this point, all the tasks are on their timeline, but they have to get it done. There is something to be said for accomplishing something.

Personally, I am quite pleased that certain things have been stripped from our schedule. I normally have three athletes in four sports year round, but now, having nowhere to be on the weekends has been WONDERFUL!

I’ve noticed that as we have found our new groove, or “new normal,” there is less bickering, and although there are still some feelings of insecurity about the future, establishing and following a routine has helped calm the storm.

I’ve also learned to STOP when one of the kids needs a break or reassurance. This can be displayed in a variety of ways, but with my children, it usually manifests as neediness or crankiness. We stop, sit on the couch, talk if they

want – but the focus is to STOP. One of my kids likes their hair stroked, while another wants lotion rubbed on their skin. Whatever the method, they need reassurance.

Additionally, we are focusing on the good, like bunnies that appear in our backyard after it rains, or the signs in the yards of friends saying hello, or the new puzzle that arrived in the mail for us to work on.

The reason I am telling you this is so you know you are not alone. Everyone is feeling similar things and THAT'S OKAY! We have emotions for a reason – because what we are experiencing is HARD. Acknowledge your emotions, feel them, get a game plan, and ask for help!

I encourage you to check out the many resources that are available at your fingertips during this pandemic, if only to just know what's out there in case you need it. Look at National PTA's website, [www.PTA.org](http://www.PTA.org); our website, [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org); the Centers for Disease Control, [www.CDC.org](http://www.CDC.org); and a new one I just found, [www.wellnesstogether.org](http://www.wellnesstogether.org), which focuses on school mental health.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay engaged!

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH RESOURCES FROM CAPTA.ORG

Parents, we know you are on triple duty—working, parenting and teaching from home — all while striving to keep your household healthy, fed and mentally balanced. We want to remind you that the California State PTA website has valuable resources that can help you and your family get through this difficult time. Our [COVID-19 Resources for Parents and Families page](#) offers:



- Information on social and emotional well-being during times of stress, including sleep hygiene, mindfulness, and how to help children cope with the crisis
- Learning at home and distance-learning resources for parents, children and educators
- Advice on how to maintain healthy habits such as eating well and getting enough exercise when normal routines are disrupted

## PREVENTING DISTRACTED DRIVING AMONG TEENAGERS

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, which was established to draw attention to the serious problem of reckless and distracted driving in America. Between 2012-2018, distracted driving killed 23,000 people in the U.S. Teenagers are especially at risk — in fact, it is the #1 killer of teenagers in America.

Our education partner, **Impact Teen Drivers**, promotes evidence-based education to save lives, prevent crashes, and ultimately to stop reckless and distracted driving. They offer some great [learning resources](#) for parents, including information on the Graduated Drivers License (GDL) program.



## TAKE ACTION!

Stay Connected  
During the Outbreak

Did You Miss Our  
Virtual Meetings Webinar?

Community Support Banners  
Now Available in the PTA Store!



CETF can help families affected by COVID-19 find low-cost or free internet and computer solutions.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Don't worry - you can view the recording of this helpful learning session about best practices and tools for effective tele- and videoconferencing.

[WATCH NOW](#)



Show your appreciation for those going above and beyond during this difficult time with a PTA banner offering a positive, inspirational message.

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