



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## New Connection Corner Blog Provides Tools to Support Youth Mental Health During Stressful Times

Youth and families are currently impacted by a variety of stressful events outside of their control. Changes in normal routines, limited social interaction with friends and families, and missed significant life events can all increase the stress and anxiety children and families are feeling. University of Illinois Extension Youth Educators Judy Schmidt and Emily Schoenfelder have started a new blog dedicated to helping families cope with stress and anxiety.

[Connection Corner](#) blog focuses on timely information, activities, and resources to help people stay connected to loved ones, the world around them, and themselves. The blog includes topics such as outdoor family activities, journaling, family conversation starters, breathing exercises, and more. New articles are posted weekly.

"During stressful times, youth may not be fully able to communicate what they are feeling," explained Judy Schmidt, "It is important for family members to support each other and to be on the look out for signs that youth are struggling."

"While our main audience is youth and families," continued Judy, "the reality is that the strategies and tools we share are helpful to everyone."

Since launching the blog in November 2020, over 600 individuals have utilized the blog articles. Others have been able to gain a glimpse of the information via the Extension and 4-H Facebook pages within the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit.

"We kicked off the new year with a special Connection Corner kit giveaway," Judy stated. "We created and delivered resources kits to 125 families that included materials and instructions for activities such as kindness challenges, relaxation exercises, and mood monitoring."

Parents, grandparents, or other adults who see youth on a daily basis are the people in the best position to help them navigate difficult times. Some key strategies recommended include:

- Talk to your child about current events.
- Reassure them that they are safe, loved, and will always be well taken care of.
- Try to maintain a routine.
- Monitor media consumption.
- Encourage new interests, learn new skills.
- Maintain family and other social ties.
- Be a role model and practice stress management. If you are calm and confident your child is likely to be too.

In addition to the resources found on Connection Corner, families can find more hands-on activities at [4-h.org/about/4-h-at-home/](https://4-h.org/about/4-h-at-home/).

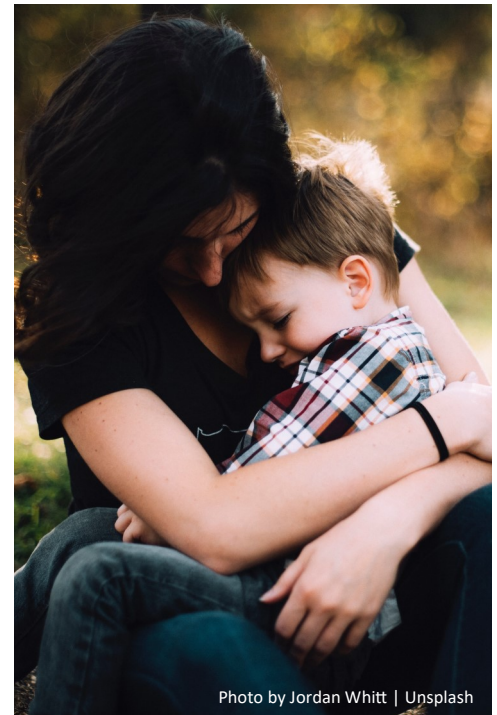


Photo by Jordan Whitt | Unsplash

*During stressful times, it is important for family members to support each other and watch for signs that youth are struggling. Extension Youth Educators have created a new blog focused on strategies and resources that help families cope with stress and anxiety.*

**Connection Corner Blog**

[extension.illinois.edu/blogs/connection-corner](https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/connection-corner)

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