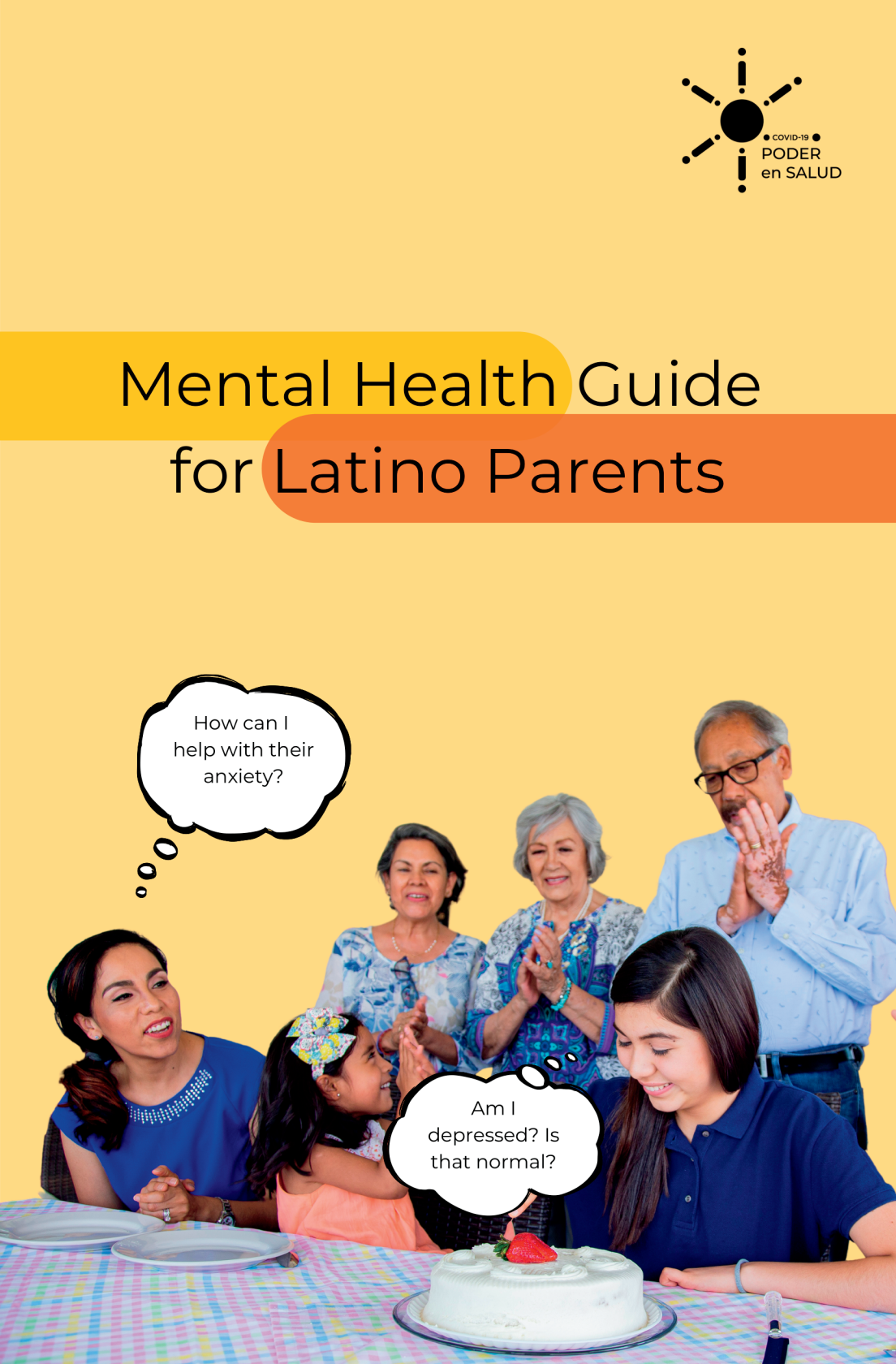


Mental Health Guide for Latino Parents



How can I
help with their
anxiety?

Am I
depressed? Is
that normal?

THE BIG 3

Has your child been feeling or acting differently since the pandemic started? **You are not alone.**

People of all backgrounds and ages experience changes in their mood and mental health throughout the course of their lives. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these changes seem more noticeable and, for some, more difficult to manage. This booklet will provide you with information that can help you and your child. Let's start with some basic definitions. We call these "The Big 3."

Stress

1

Stress is usually a response that is out of your control to something that happens to you, like having to wait in line for a COVID-19 test or catching up on a lot of homework after missing school due to quarantining. Everyone experiences positive and negative stress. Healthy stress can motivate us to accomplish a goal; but repeated, chronic stress can lead to fatigue and illness, when uncontrolled. You can help your child to learn to manage stressful events through simple exercises. Read on!

Anxiety

2

Anxiety is a reaction to feeling stressed and can stay inside of us before and even after a stressful event has passed. Anxiety can have your child feeling nervous or overwhelmed, *"I'm worried about my mamita ... what if she gets COVID-19 because of me?"*

Intense anxiety can affect your child's mood and normal daily activities. Some people experience anxiety without a bad event happening at all! Anxiety is a common mental health condition that can be treated, and don't worry, we have some tips to help on page 4

Depression

3

Depression is a condition determined by a drastic change in mood and behavior. Depression is heavier than feeling down over a bad grade and lasts longer than a reaction to a stressful event. When your child's depression affects their regular activities for several days and weeks, it may be clinical depression. Clinical depression can be genetic, influenced by life circumstances, or other illnesses.

Most importantly, it can be treated with proper social and/or medical support, including counseling by a trained health care provider.

Is this normal?

Changes to your mental health and mood are normal and talking about these changes to receive help is also normal. It's even recommended!

Did you know that Latino youth experience certain mental health conditions like clinical depression more frequently than other racial or ethnic groups? Language barriers, challenges with trying to "fit in", lack of health insurance, and other cultural taboos commonly cause difficulty in noticing signs and accessing care.

In Rhode Island, 1 in 3 Latino middle school (34.9%) and high schoolers (36.8%) report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more.

Mental health challenges among Latino youth, and the demand for services to treat these conditions, have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the data is limited since 50% never received proper care. *Together, we can improve this.*

Parents: Let's investigate!

But, what are the signs? It is easier to recognize and respond to mental health conditions if we know what to look for in our children. A call for help from them can look like...



Emotional symptoms:

- Expressing feelings of worry or dread
- Restlessness or irritability
- Anticipating the worst
- Being watchful for signs of danger

Physical symptoms:

- Feeling tense or jumpy
- Feeling a pounding or racing heart & shortness of breath
- Sweating, tremors and twitches
- Headaches, fatigue and insomnia
- Upset stomach, frequent urination/diarrhea
- Inability to eat or overeating

When your child experiences 5 or more of the following symptoms at the *same time* for at least *two weeks*, they may be experiencing **clinical depression**.

- Increased irritability (bad mood)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Overeating or not eating at all
- Oversleeping or not sleeping enough
- Feelings of sadness, guilt, or hopelessness
- Lack of interest in fun activities
- Low energy levels or general tiredness
- Physical aches and pains
- Social isolation
- Thoughts of death, or suicidal thoughts



Remember: Anxiety and Depression can look different in different people, but YOU know your child and will have the best chance at recognizing concerning and/or on-going emotional and behavioral changes. You are the key in getting them the care and support they may need.

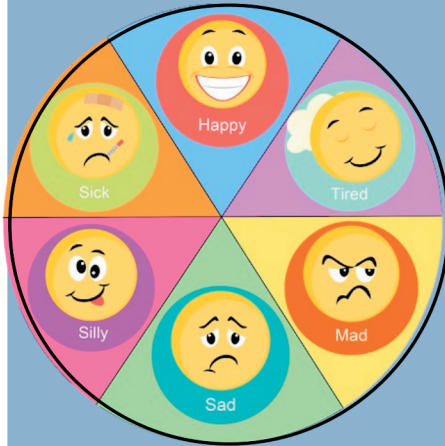
Help is here

Don't be discouraged! We can manage these challenges with some extra help.

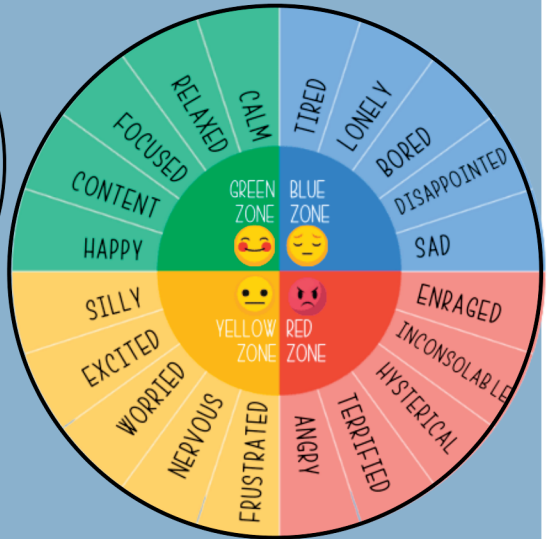
There are many tools available to help you recognize and cope with your child's mental health challenges at home and/or in a healthcare setting with a trained mental health professional. Read on to learn about our 10 "basics." Encourage your child to talk about hard feelings with trained medical professionals and/or people they trust.

A "feeling wheel" can help children express what is going on inside of them, especially if they don't have the words on their own. Also, ask your child how often they feel a certain emotion and what helps them feel better. This information can help you help them. It can be helpful to prioritize a daily or weekly feelings "check-in."

Ages 14-18



Ages 11-14



Back to the basics

1. Make sure your child/children are sleeping well, eating well, and drinking plenty of water throughout the day.
2. Try setting a reasonable bedtime that will allow your child to rest for at least 8 hours.
3. Establish healthy limits for screen time including social media use.
4. Encourage breaks from news and social media to promote rest and allow your child to turn to other stimulating activities, especially before bedtime or on certain days of the week.
5. Fit in daily or weekly walks as a family to stay connected and active.



A Step Further

6. Maintain contact with your child's teachers and peers – they are usually the first to notice any mood or behavior changes.
7. Patience over punishment. It is easy to confuse these symptoms as intentional bad behavior, but punishment can often worsen the symptoms of unmanaged mental health and keep children quiet about their struggles.
8. Celebrate small wins when you notice your child is making improvements.
9. Be a role model! Your child will learn to open up by seeing you talk about difficult emotions with them. You can be your child's safe space by sharing and receiving thoughts/feelings without shame or judgement.
10. Seek mental health support for yourself if and whenever necessary.

Taking Action

Help your child feel better TODAY. They deserve it! Mental health is HEALTH and there is power in seeking help when you are concerned about your child(ren).

If you or a loved one is having thoughts of suicide or experiencing a crisis and needs help immediately, **CALL:**

AMOR RI Mental Health 24 Hour Support Line for free bilingual psychiatry and therapy | (401)-675-1414

Lifespan Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Access Center for Latino mental health support services | (401)606-0606.

BH Link offers 24/7 mental health crisis support and referrals for ongoing care | (401) 414-LINK (5465)

National Suicide Prevention Spanish Lifeline | 1-888-628-9454

If you or a loved one does not speak English, **REACH:**

Progreso Latino Wellness Program for referrals, COVID-19 questions, and basic needs support with our Promotores de Salud or visit us at 626 Broad Street, Central Falls, RI 02863 | (401)728-5920

If finances or documentation status are preventing you from getting help, find **LOCAL SUPPORT:**

Central Falls Food Pantry: to visit our kitchen Mondays & Wednesdays 10am-1pm (Don't worry about your next meal)

Jenks Pediatrics: for pediatric healthcare at 577 Broad St. Central Falls, RI 02863 | (401) 305-1950

Blackstone Valley Community Healthcare: for affordable medical care at 39 East Ave, Pawtucket, RI 02860 | (401) 347-9093

Clínica Esperanza: for affordable medical care at 60 Valley St. #104 Providence, RI 02909 | (401) 347-9093

If you want more information about COVID-19 and Latino Mental Health, **VISIT:**

PODER en SALUD Website: to learn more about COVID-19 and youth at www.poderensalud.org

Informed Immigrant Website: to learn more about mental health and Latino immigrants at <https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/mental-health-undocumented-immigrants/>

If you or your child are in crisis, your child has gone missing, or you feel you are in immediate danger, **CALL 911 immediately.**



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