

## Calming Anxieties During Coronavirus

**I**f you feel anxiety during coronavirus, you are not alone. The novel coronavirus (abbreviated as COVID-19) has created ripple effects into almost every aspect of our lives. Schools and workplaces have closed, affecting the way we live every day. Much has changed in such a short amount of time. America's 437,283 children in foster care, for whom life can already feel unpredictable, are particularly vulnerable to the disruption that COVID-19 has brought to daily life. This article will talk about the feelings of anxiety and techniques to calm those feelings during COVID-19.

### What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal response when faced with something that is threatening or dangerous, embarrassing or stressful. It is natural to feel the need for safety, certainty, predictability, and control when we face a crisis, the unknown, or sudden change. Anxiety serves as a signal to pay attention so we can protect ourselves. It alerts us and prompts us to adapt. But when we are overwhelmed by anxiety, it sometimes can do more harm than good. When anxiety becomes overwhelming, we are less able to rise to a challenge, and we can get stuck.

### What are the Signs of Anxiety?

Anxiety is usually experienced in three different ways: physical feelings, thoughts, and behavior patterns. Physical feelings of anxiety are a result of the body doing a number of things to prepare for quick action or a quick escape from the potential danger. This is called the fight-or-flight response. Physical changes that result from the fight-or-flight response can be increased heart rate, heavy or rapid



breathing, stomach aches, nausea, fatigue, sweating, vomiting, diarrhea and headaches.

Thoughts associated with anxiety are usually related to worrying about a threat or danger or that something bad is going to happen. Behavior patterns of anxiety include restlessness, irritability, insomnia, fidgeting, pacing, crying, clinging, shaking, or avoidance of regular activities.

### Identifying Anxiety

When children feel anxious, it may or may not be clear to caregivers. Anxiety in children could look like:

- Reassurance-seeking
- Reluctance to separate from parents
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches
- Moodiness and irritability
- Tantrums or meltdowns
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble concentrating

Children may not always be able to express how they are feeling. For younger children, using a feelings chart instead of asking children to use their words can help. With a feelings chart, which can be found on the internet, caregivers can ask children to point to the feeling they are having. Caregivers can also use a traffic light chart to help children share how intense their feeling is — a red light means they feel overwhelmed, a yellow light is medium and a green light is okay.

For children who are better able to articulate how they are feeling, psychologists suggest asking "forced choice questions." Rather than asking a vague question, such as 'How was your day?', try asking, "Did your anxiety get in the way of you having a good day today?"

### Techniques for Calming Anxiety

Below are some tips that can help caregivers and children cope with anxiety and

provide a sense of control during this uncertain time. Many are simple techniques with proven benefits.

**Follow the advice of experts.** First, know what to do to avoid the spread of germs. This not only helps keep everyone safer, it gives you a sense of control. Wash your hands well and often. Keep surfaces clean. Stay at home. Keep a safe distance from others. When you do these things, you protect yourself, your family, and your community.

**Build a Routine.** Routines are comforting for children, so do your best to keep as many of them as you can. Stick to regular bed and wake-up times, meal and snack times, screen time, chores, and other household routines. But build in new routines to include school work, breaks, and exercise. When possible, help your child take control by giving a couple of choices. For example, let your child choose what to eat for lunch. When doing school work, you can ask what your child would like to do next. Visual schedules and to-do lists can help children know what to expect, while timers and 2-minute warnings can help with transitions.

**Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.** Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.

**Notice, label, and accept emotions.** When you or your child feels anxious, identify the feeling. Putting a label on what we feel can help reduce our concern. Accept anxiety as one of your many emotions. Don't ignore it, fight it, reject it, or be afraid of it. Don't judge yourself or others for feeling it. Give yourself permission to be human.

**Direct your attention or practice mindfulness.** When you notice anxious thoughts, know that you don't have to dwell on them. Direct your attention to things that help you feel calm. You can use techniques such as guided imagery (easily found on YouTube or Google Video) or mindfulness practices that help you focus on being in the moment.

## San Francisco COVID-19 Testing Options

Anyone living or working in San Francisco can get tested for COVID-19 at various locations.

Testing is currently open for:

- Any person living in San Francisco that has 1 symptom of COVID-19 (listed below) or has been in close contact with a positive COVID-19 person.
- Any essential or frontline worker serving the community of San Francisco regardless of symptoms or exposure.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- Temperature greater than 100F (37.8C)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

- Chills
- Headache
- Body aches
- Fatigue
- Loss of smell
- Diarrhea
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion

You can get a free test at a number of sites around San Francisco or visit your healthcare provider. You do not need medical insurance to get tested. You do not need a doctor's note to schedule a test. However, you must make an appointment. The results are available 1 to 3 days after getting tested.

For more information, visit <https://sf.gov/find-out-how-get-tested-coronavirus>.

**Practice breathing.** Just pausing to take a breath can calm you in a difficult moment. It can help you pause before you react, and choose how to react. Specifically, "belly breathing" or diaphragmatic breathing is most helpful. Practice for 5–10 minutes a day.

**Practice physical distancing, but social togetherness.** Staying in touch with friends and family is important during this time. Feeling close to others reduces anxiety, and has been known to boost the immune system. Even though everyone is staying home, we can reach out by phone, video chat, or social media and feel close, even while we are physically apart.

**Practice gratitude.** Noticing what we are grateful for is a powerful remedy to anxiety. Showing gratitude is another way to feel close to others. It benefits your mood and your health. Say a simple heartfelt thank-you. Make a list of what you're grateful for. Send a letter to someone who's helped you. Let loved ones know how much they mean to you.

**Be active.** Even though we are staying at home, find ways to be active every day, including time outdoors while still practice social distancing. Exercise relaxes you. It generates hormones that boost the body's immune system.

**Keep your balance.** When caregivers have a hard time dealing with COVID-19, their anxiety may be inadvertently passed on to children. While caring for children in your home, be sure that you take breaks and recharge, too.

**Know when to reach out for help.** If the anxiety seems overwhelming, including if you or your child is having trouble sleeping, eating, or interacting with others, get help. Most primary care providers and behavioral health providers are offering telehealth visits during this time and can schedule time with patients. Don't be afraid to reach out for help during this stressful time.

You can find other resources for foster youth impacted by COVID-19 on the SF Casa website: <https://www.sfcasa.org/covid/#resources>.

# In Remembrance of Joshua Jackson Wyatt and Grantland Singleton

## Joshua Jackson Wyatt

was an active member of the community who truly strived to make the world a better place. He firmly believed that he was given a second chance at a first class life, which came with the responsibility to give back to others around him. With this motto, Joshua was the type of person who put in the extra work and research to ensure the best possible outcome for his family and any children that came into his care.



Joshua wasn't always sure he wanted to become a father. Much like other nervous new parents, he questioned his ability to care for children. However, when Joshua and his husband William received their first placement, Joshua demonstrated that he was a gentle, loving caregiver and a natural father. He was assuredly up in the middle of the night with the children in his care, feeding them, changing their diapers, cuddling and keeping them calming.

Joshua became a proud father and considered it one of his greatest accomplishments. William recalled the day that the county called asking if they could care for a newborn with special needs who needed a foster home. Joshua went

to the hospital to visit the boy, and knew that baby was meant to come home with them. The couple fostered the boy before adopting him.

Joshua's dedication to his family far surpassed any fears he may have had initially. He was present for his husband and children, and relished in putting the need of others before his own. He touched a lot of people's hearts and made a difference in the lives of children he cared for.

Joshua passed away on May 2, 2020 and is survived by his husband, William Jackson Wyatt, and their two-year-old son, Connor.

For anyone who had met **Grantland (Grant) Singleton**, you knew him as a loving, generous, kind-hearted man who loved his family and loved kids. Grant also had a great sense of humor, finding joy in many situations, including during life's biggest challenges.



While Mr. Singleton spent much of his life working, with 7 years in the military and 30 years at UCSF Mount Zion as a technician in the surgery department, he made up for any lost time with children by

fostering. Mr. and Mrs. Singleton become foster parents over 30 years ago when their nieces' social worker presented them with an idea that would change their lives forever. Over the past 30 years, they welcomed many, many children into their homes. Mr. Singleton loved working with each child and being a part of their life even after they were reunified with their parents or adopted.

Mr. Singleton was fair, diplomatic, and gave children a voice, often when they thought they didn't have one. He enjoyed taking children to the park, but most of all holding them in his arms. Mrs. Singleton described that when she put children down in their beds for sleep, Mr. Singleton would rush in and want to hold the little ones first. This sometimes meant that he would hold them for hours while they sat together in his chair watching CNN.

Besides trips to Costco on a regular basis, Mr. Singleton's biggest joys were the children in his care. They were what kept him going and kept him active, even when his health had started to deteriorate. His service for the community was recognized by Family Builders, which presented Mr. and Mrs. Singleton an award for their work with foster children.

For anyone who wants to make a donation in his memory or send well wishes, please contact A'sonda Adams at [iencourageyou2@aol.com](mailto:iencourageyou2@aol.com).

## K.I.D.S.

Published bimonthly for San Francisco County foster parents, resource families, NREFMs and kin care providers. To suggest a topic, submit an article, promote an event, or provide feedback, email [Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org](mailto:Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org).

### Editorial Staff

Editors: Agnes Balla and Sharon Walchak  
Amabel Baxley, Kimberlee Pitters

City and County of San Francisco/Family & Children Services  
PO Box 7988 • 170 Otis Street, San Francisco, CA 94120

Newsletter Website: <https://sfcaresforkids.org/kids-newsletter/>

### Helpful Phone Numbers

HSA Operator	(415) 557-5000
CPS Child Abuse Hotline	(800) 856-5553 or (415) 558-2650
Foster Care Ombudsman	(415) 558-2828
Transportation Duty Line	(415) 557-5376
Licensing/RFA/Recruitment Hotline	(415) 558-2200
San Francisco Families Making a Difference	
Mentor Program for Care Providers	(415) 557-5400
Free Foster Parenting Respite Service	(415) 861-4060 x 3035
Community Services	211
Non-emergency Government Services	311

FCS Agency Directory: [www.sfhsa.org/174.htm](http://www.sfhsa.org/174.htm)



## Parenting for Permanency College News

**S**an Francisco Family and Children Services and Parenting for Permanency College (PPC), continue to provide training through virtual platforms such as Zoom and Foster Parent College to meet the needs of Care Providers. Starting in July Care Provider meetings will also be offered Via Zoom. These meetings include, Quarterly Care Giver Meeting, monthly QPI meeting, monthly Recruitment Meeting and bi-monthly Resource Family Convening Meeting. For more information of upcoming meetings, please reach out to your RFA Worker or contact Arlene Hylton at [Arlene.hylton@sfgov.org](mailto:Arlene.hylton@sfgov.org) or 415-557-5067.

### **AFS PPC Training Program**

We offer RFA Pre-Service, Advanced Training and Placement (SA/HIV and ABC's of Baby Care) Training. We also collaborate with City College of San Francisco to provide CPR training. To obtain information and register please contact:  
[PPC@afs4kids.org](mailto:PPC@afs4kids.org)

### **RFA Ongoing Training Resources**

Approved Resource Families are required to complete 8 hours of training yearly. You can access training from a variety of sources including but not limited to the PPC Training program (listed above) and the list of training provided (below).

We encourage you to make sure to maintain and provide training certificates to your RFA Worker especially when utilizing the list of training options below:

#### **Foster Parent College**

<http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/>

#### **QPI California**

Just In Time Training

<http://www.qpicalifornia.org/>

#### **Mandated Reporter Training**

<https://mandatedreporterca.com/>

#### **Foster and Kinship Care Education**

**through City College of San Francisco**

To contact Terry at 415-239-3171 for updates on training being offered

## **Special Announcements**

### **SA/HIV Support Groups**

**SA/HIV Infant Program Support Group via Zoom until further notice:**

English meets 3rd Tuesday of each month (except December) from 6PM-8PM

Spanish meets 3rd Thursday of each month (except December) from 6PM-8PM

To attend SA/HIV Support Group, please contact Sharon Walchak (510) 282-4658

### **Other Resources**

Written Directives version 6.1 (latest version):

[https://www.cdss.ca.gov/portals/9/ccr/rfa/WD-V6.1-FINAL-1.7.20\\_AV.pdf](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/portals/9/ccr/rfa/WD-V6.1-FINAL-1.7.20_AV.pdf)

California Corona Virus (COVID -19) Information

<https://covid19.ca.gov/>

### **Department of Public Health COVID-19 website (English/Spanish)**

<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp>

[https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/coronavirus\\_facts\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/coronavirus_facts_ENG.pdf)

[https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/coronavirus\\_facts\\_SPA.pdf](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/coronavirus_facts_SPA.pdf)

### **Childcare info (link to English and Spanish resources/info)**

<https://www.sfcddp.org/infectious-diseases-a-to-z/coronavirus-2019-novel-coronavirus/#1585590211125-ccfb7e93-4edf>