



Supporting the Social & Emotional Health of Families in the Era of Covid-19

Joint PTA Presentation

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Today's Objectives:

- **Quarantine fatigue: the “adrenaline rush” of the Covid “crisis mode” has faded and now everyone is just tired. How can we persevere?**
- **How to keep spirits high during winter, especially knowing that it will be difficult to spend time outdoors.**
- **How much should we allow kids to socialize via screen time (i.e., facetime and online games) knowing their normal means of socializing via sports and play dates might not be an option?**
- **How else can we support the social and emotional health of our family (and ourselves) during this time?**



Quarantine fatigue: the “adrenaline rush” of the Covid “crisis mode” has faded and now everyone is just tired...how can we persevere?

- Quarantine fatigue is exhaustion associated with the new restrictive lifestyle that has been adopted to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Symptoms include, but are not limited to, the following: Feeling tense, irritable or anxious; Changes in eating or sleeping habits; Loss of motivation or reduced productivity; Racing thoughts; Interpersonal conflict; Social withdrawal (Massachusetts General Hospital).
- It is important for parents to support young children by ensuring their own social, emotional, and mental health. Some suggestions for coping include:
 - Practice Mindfulness: Being present, purposeful and nonjudgmental in the moment and existing within.
 - Proper nutrition, exercise and sleep have effects on mental health and mood. It helps to improve memory and concentration.
 - Connect with others: One of the top predictors of how happy and healthy you are is the quality of your relationships (Dr. Waldinger, Mass General).
 - Maintain structure, consistency, and predictability at home.
 - Include children in discussions about creative ways to celebrate holidays and milestones.
 - Have conversations with children about being part of a community.

Keeping spirits high during the winter

Ideas for Indoor Fun:

- Family Pajama Day (watch movies, bake cookies, play board games)
- DIY Spa Day
- Family Game Night (could include extended family & friends virtually)
- Family Performance Time
- Baking
- Pen pals - send handwritten letters or drawings.
- Explore a new hobby - crafting, sewing



Keeping spirits high during the winter.

Ideas for Outdoor Fun:

- Go on a nature themed scavenger hunt
- Build walks and movement breaks into your daily/weekly routine
- Make a bird feeder and hang it outside
- Go Sledding
- Build a snowman, snow family, igloo, or other snow sculptures
- Make snow angels
- Exploring local trails



Reframing Negative Thoughts (from the Center for Healthy Minds)

Negative Thoughts or Emotions	Reframe	Action
I'm not able to see loved ones.	I have found new ways to connect. I have been reminded of how precious life is and am more open in expressing my love and appreciation for others.	Write a handwritten letter to those you love. Put into words all the things you appreciate about them. Mail it to them. Better yet, call them and read it to them. Send a care package if you're able.
I'm scared.	It's ok to be scared. I'm also resilient.	Allow yourself to feel the feelings. They are real and they should not be pushed aside. Find someone to talk to who can help – a friend, a family member or a mental health professional.
I am not able to do the things I normally like to do.	I've been able to try new things. I've spent a lot more time outdoors. I've also been able to check things off my 'to do' list that have been sitting around for far too long.	Try something new. Maybe it's a craft or reading a book that's been sitting on your shelf for awhile. Get outside. Share ideas with others.
Things aren't going to get better. This is never going to end.	I know they will get better and this too shall pass. Patience is important and giving myself and others grace during such a difficult time is going to test who we are as individuals and as a society.	When you hear this from others, reassure them that things are going to get better. Let them know we're all in this together.

How much should we allow kids to socialize via iPads using Facetime and online games?

The AAP recommends no more than one hour of screen time per day for 2-5 years olds and no more than two hours per day for older children.

- When it comes to limiting time on screens, there's one important exception: **social connections**. Take advantage of technology to stay connected with friends and family, even if doing so means your child spends a little more time on screens than you typically allow.
- Video calls can be a great way to **maintain relationships** and stay connected to loved ones. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports face-timing with relatives, and does not include this as part of the usual recommended screen-time limitations.
- Considering your child's usual **social schedule** may be a good way to figure out how much social screen time makes sense.
- Online games can offer genuine **social connection** for kids.

Some Mindful Options for Screen Time

Choose high quality screen experiences that have educational value such as:

- [Scholastic](#) has daily educational activities for children of all ages, beginning with preK.
- [Audible](#) has free audio books for kids to stream in multiple languages.
- [Kids' Yoga](#) and other exercise classes are readily available online.
- The [Boston Children's Museum](#) (and many other museums) have virtual offerings for kids.
- [Zooborns](#) has webcams of baby animals (as do many zoos and aquariums.)
- [Writopia Lab](#) has terrific online writing workshops for kids ages 7 to 18.
- [Mo Willems](#) teaches kids drawing on Thursdays.
- [Tilt Parenting](#) has put together a terrific list of online resources and ideas.

Considerations for Screen Time

Brainstorm a list of alternate activities.

- Brainstorm some fun ideas that your child or children can do on their own and make a list with your child.
- Make a schedule/chart - Set specific times of the day or week when your kids know they'll be allowed to use their screens. Include time for connecting with peers, movement, and play. They need these activities to work through emotions of sadness, anxiety, and fear which may be contributing to excessive screen time.
- If you are working on lessening screen time with a more structured schedule, you may see an initial increase in volatility and a decrease in aggressive and irritable behavior over time as your child adjusts to less screen time.

How else can we support the social and emotional health of our family (and ourselves) during this time?

- **Take care of yourself**
- **Stay connected**
- **Focus on positive interactions with children.**
- **Answer questions and acknowledge difficult situations.**
- **Engage in family wellness activities**
- **Stay present**

Social Emotional Learning Taking Place in School

Within the classroom, daily social emotional learning takes place through activities that support emotional awareness, self-management, kindness, and responsible decision making.

These activities may include feelings check-ins, stories with social emotional content, Sanford Harmony SEL curriculum, and opportunities for teachable moments.

Additional supports provided by mental health staff include:

- Social/emotional read alouds and discussion
- Unity Day
- SEL lessons with Mrs. Vincent
- Social stories
- Newsletters to parents and staff

Sources and Suggested Resources:

Aha Parenting: <https://www.ahaparenting.com/blog/managing-screen-time-during-the-lockdown>

Calm.com

Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/article/screen-time-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>

Center for Healthy Minds:

https://centerhealthyminds.org/join-the-movement/six-ways-to-support-childrens-well-being-during-the-pandemic?utm_source=Center+for+Healthy+Minds&utm_campaign=c2ca64b238-Apr2020_DNewsletter_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_cc e2315563-c2ca64b238-9579663

Cosmic Kids Yoga; Yoga with Adrienne; Big Life Journal; Creativity Class with Aree Chung
<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Headspace.com

Pandemic Parenting: <https://www.pandemic-parent.org>

Instagram Resources:

@Dayswithgrey

@7daysofplay

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER:

Each month the primary and elementary school social workers put together a monthly newsletter to assist parents in addressing various concerns.

<https://www.smore.com/sp1g3>

Great Resources:

<https://www.pandemic-parent.org/>

<https://childmind.org/our-impact/school-and-community/student-success-webinar-program/>

Coming Soon: Virtual Community Support Fair...

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