



#LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

In this issue:

- Staying Safe in the Summer
- Talking to kids about racism and oppression
- Socially Distant Activities
- Weekly Parent Checklist
- Confronting the Unknowns
- Virtual Activities to do with Family and Friends
- HOPE CHATS
- Who is your clinical team and how to contact

How are we doing and what would you like to see in the Clinical Newsletter?

We want to connect with you! Please let Angie Huber know what you would like to see in the newsletter. We will do our best to meet your request. Send any requests to aahuber@fcps.edu.

Staying Safe in the Summer

(by: Joanna Wheeler School Psychologist Liberty MS)

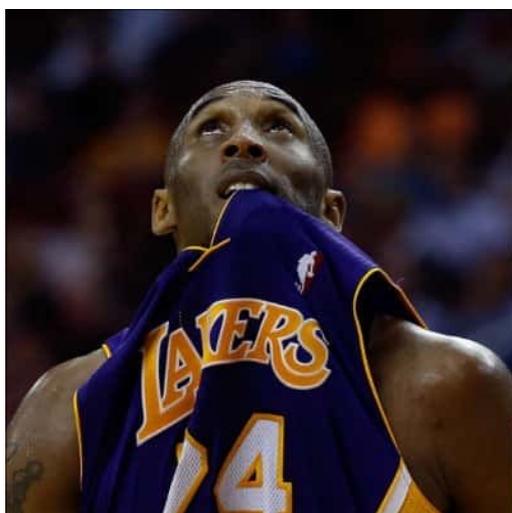
Summer is upon us. For most of us, this usually means summertime activities and increased time with friends and family. However, due to COVID-19, how do we have summer fun and keep ourselves and others safe? Thoughtful pre-planning and mindful participation may help.

Just as there are guidelines for pool safety, there are also guidelines for COVID-19 safety. What makes COVID-19 safety a bit trickier is the fact that safety measures taken for one family may not be the appropriate safety measures for another family. Some families may have unique considerations that make their COVID-19 safety practices much more strict than other families. Therefore, parents may choose to have thoughtful conversations regarding COVID-19 safety practices before playdates or joint vacations occur. Parents should also determine who will be supervising and how much supervision is needed to make sure the agreed upon safety practices are used.

Parents and students should also consider that the planning and implementation of a safety plan are two different things. There is potential for events to arise that make using agreed upon safety practices difficult, or someone may agree to certain safety measures before an event and then change his or her mind during the event. Thus, it may be helpful for parents and students to have "What if?" conversations before events occur and have some agreed upon courses of action. This may be an opportunity for teaching students about personal responsibility. Students will need to be mindful during interactions, and in the situation, make decisions about what is appropriate for themselves and their families. As with many things, perfection in the implementation of agreed upon safety guidelines may be unrealistic, and therefore, honesty should be encouraged in admitting to parents if safety guidelines were relaxed.

Below are some considerations for handling situations where safety guidelines are not followed as expected.

- ⇒ Don't be afraid to speak up and discuss the agreed upon safety measures.
- ⇒ Don't feel like you are being rude if you need to leave an event due to a lack of safety hygiene.
- ⇒ Speak up about maintaining your physical distance from someone.
- ⇒ Students, if safety measures become too relaxed for your comfort, stay calm, voice your concern, and implement a course of action that you had pre-planned before the event with your parents.



"Everything - negative, pressure, challenges - is all an opportunity for me to rise."

- Kobe Bryant
1978-2020

Talking to Kids about Racism and Oppression

By: Angela Huber, School Social Worker



Our hearts bleed for all that our communities have been going through within the last few months. Now, we are adding protests and riots to our pandemic concerns. We know our community is hurting and trying to confront these issues in ways that are of comfort to them. Racism can be a sensitive sub-

ject, but it is vital that we address it with our children. Similar to discussing mental health concerns and having sex talks, some think talking will cause more problems, when in the end, it actually opens up communication, often helps others to feel supported as well as to make healthier decisions with guidance. Above all, it's a conversation all parents need to have, no matter your background or experience. Each family is different but please feel free to use these tips if you feel they would be helpful.

LISTEN to what is occurring and what values are developing in your family and kids' minds. **ACTUALLY, TALK ABOUT.** It is an issue that cannot be avoided and should be discussed regularly. Kids continue to learn and form opinions whether you are talking to them or not. Not talking about it can cause kids to develop problematic opinions and approaches to the problems. Talking about it also helps them to search for answers and encourages self-evaluation. Possible talking points could be regarding experiences at school, on media, in the community and within the family. What do they believe the facts to be? Some people don't talk about race because they feel it may be impolite to point out the differences of others. A baby begins to notice differences and to form thoughts and opinions. We need to help our children to develop healthy values about differences. Realize that your kids know about many things, thanks to social media, that you might not realize that they know and have opinions about which will evolve into thoughts and behaviors. Educate them about bigotry and oppression as well as different cultural histories. Point out similarities and strengths in cultures. **IMPORTANT:** Try to find a balance in talking about the concerns and not overdoing it. Children will tend to tune you out, if they are not given time to have experiences and to think about conversations.

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BE SELF AWARE... It starts with what do you believe? What opinions, judgements and behaviors do you have? Are you open to someone else's opinion or are you only trying to impress your own opinion on others? All races are impacted by racial concerns. We all hurt in various ways. The raw emotion and thought sharing is what brings compassion, understanding and healing. Work to be aware of your biases, so you in turn can help your child to similarly be aware of his biases. If you have a bias, it is okay to address that with your children, in an effort of showing that you are not perfect, but are working for unity and growth.

BE MINDFUL THAT YOU ARE SETTING THE EXAMPLE... Make a point to learn more, fact check and learn about people who are different from you. It is not about whose perspective is right or wrong but realizing that there are different opinions and thoughts while being open to acknowledging and understanding them. Are you putting yourself in situations to be exposed to people who are different from you and are you helping to educate or hinder any change in racism? Are you sharing about your life and openly interested in hearing someone share about their life? Are you encouraging your children to have a diverse network of friends? Have you helped to facilitate discussions with your children's friends of diverse backgrounds? Our children learn most from the actions and experiences we provide for them. Healing and growth are powerful when done together. Don't forget to take your kids to safe events to help them understand diversities.

LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD'S QUESTIONS AND EXPERIENCES... First and foremost, teach your children to be respectfully curious. It used to be a taboo or impolite topic but no more, so take advantage of teaching and growing together. When a child asks you, "Why does ___ look like that?" Answer them with something like: "We are all made differently, and this is what makes our world a beautiful place" and remember this conversation for another time when you can expand with your child. When your child says something with demeaning undertones, begin to question their thoughts and work to understand the origin of their undertones. The intention behind a question is vital in addressing the actual question, which always means more questioning and listening. Then, education them and help them to find a more respectful and compassionate understanding as well as behavior.

BE OPEN TO ADMITTING THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW... It is okay to not always have the answer and to say that you would like to think about it and get back to them soon.

MAKE IT RELATABLE... any type of oppression has a feeling of unfairness. Many children whine and complain about fairness? Fairness matters to children and is a perfect way to relate the issues of oppression. As they grow and have more knowledge, this conversation can develop more. Be careful to not use phrases like "Life is not fair", instead focus on what changes can be made to help in the change toward unity, compassion and understanding.

WHEN PEOPLE OFFEND OR FEEL OFFENDED... This can be hard!!! Emotions can run raw and defenses are up!! People offend and feel offended in numerous different ways. Everyone is different, so what offends one may not offend another. It is always a good start to try to open up a conversation to understand the other person's thoughts and opinions or at a minimum have a blanket statement to say when something bothered you. In starting the conversation, you could say "What made you say ___".

If your child unintentionally offended, your child should make the effort to actively listen to why their peer is offended and offer a sincere apology. This skill is helpful in numerous interactions in our lives. Communications are often misunderstood and need healthy ways for reconciliation in order for growth to occur. Educate your children on stigmas and how all people are unique and different with varying experiences, opinions and feelings in all races and professions so they can educate others. We all have a responsibility to learn from each other and to strive to work in unity together. Help your child to learn language and terms that are acceptable. Small differences such as saying "the child from Asia" as opposed to "Asian child" goes a long way. Names are much better, as labels often lose the uniqueness of the individual.

Continued page 5



HOPE

Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."



Compassion and tolerance are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.
 Dalai Lama

by Unknown Author is licensed under

How to keep you and your middle schooler connected and active while practicing social distancing?

(by: Kim Picinich School Psychologist Liberty MS)

Summer always present challenges for parents and students regarding keeping minds and bodies nourished, and the need for social connections met. This summer certainly presents additional significant obstacles for all of us, as far as how to have fun, be creative, be kind, stay active and socially distance and stay safe at the same time. Below listed are indoor and outdoor activities designed to do as a family as well as activities for your children to do with their friends.

Outdoor Activities to do with family and friends

Hiking- We are lucky to live in an area that is home to beautiful hiking trails. Check them out at alltrails.com. Have an adventure with your family each week by choosing a trail to explore. Pack some snacks and/or lunch and enjoy the day!

Bike rides/roller blading/walks around your town and/or neighborhood after dinner each night. Have your child set up times with their friends to do these activities together.

Water Fun – Sprinklers, and or inflatable pools – add some popsicles for an afternoon or evening of good old-fashioned fun.

Grow Vegetables - There are so many ways to create vegetable/herbs with just a little bit of outside space. Talk with your family about what you might want to try and grow, buy some pots, or if room allows, a raised garden bed and spend summer watching them grow!

Visit a farm and pick seasonal fruits. There are several U-Pick Farms in the northern VA area. Check them out at pickyourown.org. Strawberries are in season now through the middle of June, cherries, blueberries, and blackberries in June and July, peaches and tomatoes from July through September, and apples are ready to pick in August! Research recipes and create some fruit



Parents need accountability just as much as kids.

Check out this weekly parent checklist for positive habit tracking!

WEEKLY PARENT CHECKLIST

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Hugged my child for no reason							
Helped my child clean their room							
Took a calming breath before talking							
Played a board game with my child...and had fun!							
Apologized when I got upset							
Showed grace to my child when they got upset							
Did something silly, just to make my child laugh							
Did something just for me, because when I am not calm neither is my child							

Confronting the numerous unknowns

By: Angie Huber, School Social Worker

In the past several months, we have dealt with so many unknowns! Daily unknowns are questioning if we should go out of our home, fearful that we or our loved ones may contract COVID, questioning if we will be able to get food that we need, questioning if we will be able to get our medical needs met and some questioning how they will survive financially. We wonder about the next school year and how we will adjust if our world does not resume our “normalcy”... whatever that may be for each of us. To add to these numerous stresses, we know have the unknowns of rioting, protesting and the continued struggle of trying to find unity, fairness and respect for all races.

People are hurting, people are fearful, people are angry, people are stressed! Unity and a change of mindset seems to be some of the big answers in healing and overcoming these concerns.

How does unity impact self-care? We show unity by genuinely respecting each other and working hard to understand everyone’s opinions and thoughts. Unity helps to reduce stress and to promote self-care. Connecting with others helps us to feel supported, not have tunnel vision and to feel involved. We have our communities and will be in this together!

How do I know if I need to change my mindset toward the unknown and then how to I change it?

Start by examining how you respond to stress. Are you being destructive in how you are handling stress? Are you sleep deprived? Are you having abnormal physical, behavioral, cognitive or emotional symptoms? Do you have a support system? How do you produce your best work? Knowing your habits and how you respond emotionally, behaviorally, physically, and cognitively is the first start in trying to find the healthiest approach for yourself. Changing your approach to fear, uncertainty and stress can be life changing.

A growth mindset tells us that our emotions, thoughts and behaviors can be flexible and ever changing. You have the power to choose your response. You can choose to give up or grow from every experience. This includes focusing on appropriate risk taking with not always knowing the outcome.

Instead of focusing on the “what ifs” focus on “what might” happen. Turn your fears and changes into possibilities.

What can we control? What is out of your hands? You have choices! How do we help our children to feel safe? Try to avoid exaggerated words or phrases “nothing will help” or all or nothing thinking, “We will never....”.

Try to focus on your safety and use your supports in finding hope and knowing “this too shall pass”.

Are you taking care of yourself? What does this look like? Are you exercising, sleeping and eating well? Are you avoiding destructive habits? Role model healthy self-care for yourself and your kids. You could always do it together!! The media can be overwhelming, so try to keep a good balance. There is professional help, if you need it.

Activities to understand racism:

1. “Give children balls of string and ask them to move around the room unraveling their balls of string to make a very tangled web. Once they are finished, ask them to untangle it. They will soon find that it is much more difficult to untangle the web than it was to create it in the first place.” The same happens with racism.

2. Jane Elliot’s experiment: She divides the children, who were all white, by eye color, and then she told the children that people with brown eyes were smarter, faster and better than those with blue eyes. All other eye colors are excluded from the group activity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSUKmyZkTSg>

Virtual Activities to do with Family and Friends

Zoom Pizza Parties – Have your children organize a virtual pizza party with friends!

Zoom Paint Parties – How fun for your child and their friends to decide upon a picture (or any other craft) to paint and create. Set up a time to do it together and see each other’s work and progress virtually! Add snacks and it is a real party!

Zoom Work Outs – Have your child set up times to work out together with friends virtually. There are online workouts they can search or have them create their own and share with friends!

Family Indoor Activities

Organize Photos – Take a trip down memory lane with your family and sort, organize and make albums for the boxes of pictures you may have at home.

OUR **UNITY**
IS OUR **STRENGTH**
AND **DIVERSITY**
IS OUR **POWER!**

KAMALA HARRIS

Respect yourself
and others
will respect you.
Confucius

HOPE CHATS are coming soon!

Your students will be soon hearing about HOPE CHATS that will be offered in the summer. This will be a time when the students can send in questions or concerns that they would like to have addressed by a multicultural and multiprofessional team. We will cover topics on racism, mental health, stress, coping, communication and other subjects that they might like to have addressed. Students will be given an opportunity to send in topics or questions each week. We will provide the answers for students through a "HOPE CHAT" document. We will also offer a virtual time during the afterschool programming weekly. If you would like your student to send questions or concerns, please send them to Angie Huber, School Social Worker, at aahuber@fcps.edu.

Racism continued

HOW TO ADVOCATE... We all can advocate for unity, compassion and growth. Protests are a great democratic strategy to do this. Riots, unfortunately, have only proven to be more devastating for all involved. It is not setting an example of unity and peace but often promotes criminal behavior and promotes defensive police officers. We should be supporting all of human America... all races, religions, disabilities and mindsets to come to a consensus as to how our country should govern and interact based on our unified missions and values of respect and compassion for others. Too much of our divisiveness these days comes from numerous groups arguing their points and not being open to hearing and compromising for the good of all. Any communications putting others down should be addressed immediately. It is at times uncomfortable when around others to speak up, but when done respectfully and with good intent change can occur. You could have blanket statements, such as "I do not support putting others down" or "I really hope you could think about adding to unity in our country and not divisiveness". It is okay to question each other but the only way to be successful in conversations is to have a growth mindset. Be active and teach your kids that they can be a change agent. Don't forget about them using their creative talents to advocate as well. Things such as drawing/writing/dancing and singing can be powerful! Know that perseverance will make a difference.

Multicultural movies and books:

<https://www.common sense media.org/>

Fairfax County Public Library

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1s0ICA3FluIvHK6DFE2d3uYCipc6ApY8Gn2rMwm6fYqw/edit#heading=h.660636hiyb8>

Website:

TALKING ABOUT RACE .. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>

www.tolerance.org

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/talking-about-racism-and-violence-students-resources-educators>



I may not be perfect
but when I look
at my children
I know I've got
something in my life
perfectly right.

joyofmom.com ❤️ fb/joyofmom



Family Indoor Activities

Organize Photos – Take a trip down memory lane with your family and sort, organize and make albums for the boxes of pictures you may have at home.

Declutter and Donate – There is no better time to have your child go through their clothes/toys and sort through items they don't use and wear anymore. There are several organizations now picking up donated items again for free including the Salvation Army, Purple Heart, Habitat for Humanity, AMVETS, Goodwill, Pick Up Please and The Arc.

Themed Dinner Party – Luau, Movie themes, TV show themes, Holiday... the ideas are endless. Find what you have around the house, dress up, create food around the theme and have FUN!

Puzzles- When do you ever have the time to complete a 1000- piece puzzle? This summer is the time! Having trouble finding puzzles to purchase online due to the quarantine? Swap with neighbors and friends.

Clinical Team Contacts

Psychologist: Joanna Wheeler
jwheeler@fcps.edu

Social Worker: Angie Huber
aahuber@fcps.edu