



#LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

In this issue:

- Parenting in Quarantine
- Parent Self Care
- Make Things Happen
- Adjusting to Distant Learning
- Activities
- Who is your clinical team and how to contact

Why are we doing a Clinical Newsletter

We want to reach out to you in providing much needed resources. Our clinical team is here and ready to help. We know that the quarantine has brought many new challenges and we do not want you to feel alone! We are stronger together! In each newsletter, we will provide resources with articles on such topics as confronting challenging behaviors, mental health concerns, coping, difficult relationships while also providing information on safe community activities and much needed community resources.

Are you feeling like “Parenting in Quarantine” is an overwhelming expectation? If so, you are not alone...

(by: Angie Huber, School Social Worker, Liberty MS)

We have been stuck together for weeks with no definite end in sight, and it is not surprising that we are getting a little tired of the routine and each other’s company! Of course, we all know that the Facebook Pictures, just like taking any photo, with children are not the “picture” of homelife and relationships at all times. The days seem longer, pajamas are staying on all day and we may be losing track of when our kids took a bath! Then we have to find something for the kids to do for schoolwork. Let’s not forget our work expectations to add to the mix of required daily tasks. My suggestion is to KEEP IT SIMPLE in order to keep your sanity during this time.

We are stronger together than we are alone.

Walter Payton



- **Avoid overly comparing yourself with other parents.** Kids *do* need structure but your structure and expectations may be
- **Avoid overly comparing yourself with other parents.** Kids *do* need structure but your structure and expectations may be different from your neighbor, friend, sister, mother or anyone else who has a schedule that seems more stressful than doable. Come up with something and stick with your expectations or you will inevitably feel more push back from your kids and feel like you are spinning in circles. You may be fulfilling your job expectations, encouraging your kids to do distant learning, dealing with technology concerns and trying to relearn school material to help your child. Your new “norm” may not be like anyone else’s and that is okay.
- **Conflict-management skills are often learned at home- for good or bad.** Siblings argue. Always have, always will. It can feel very overwhelming right now, especially with them competing for your attention, technology, the bathroom, video games, where to sit on the couch... Encourage them to have their “own “ time to feel that there is some separation. Model good problem-solving skills for them. When everyone is calm, talk over how things could have gone down differently. Work to have them hear you handling differences in a calm, respectful manner. Kids notice **every-thing**.
- **Low and slow, gets them every time.** When kids are upset (screaming, yelling, demanding), their parents’ reactions can do one of two things: 1. make the situation better, or 2. make the situation worse. One of the strategies that is often helpful is to lower your voice tone and slow your speech. This often works when kids are *really* upset. Sometimes, they just need to cry it out and take some time. As they calm down, ask them (low and slow) if they are ready to talk about it, or if they need a little more time. Google “mirror neurons” for more on this technique. Fascinating stuff and it really does work.
- **Remember what you LIKE about each of your children. Then tell them.** Just as none of us are born with conflict management skills, neither are we born with self-esteem. We all like to hear that we are loved, and that someone notices nice things about us. It can be difficult to slip in those compliments when the day gets chaotic, but it will make a positive difference for each of your children to talk about the positives every day. Compliments go along way. Who knows, the kids might *even* start to compliment each other. Many of us get so caught up in daily life, we often forget about all of our blessings. Make time for valuing each other and expressing what is going well while acknowledging what could improve in order to make a plan together for improvements. We all have something to add to those conversations.

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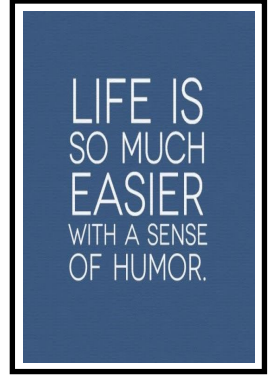
Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. Helen Keller

Parenting in Quarantine continued

- **Keep your sense of humor and limit toxic relationships!** Look for reasons to laugh each day with your kids (or in your head at the novelty of this time in our lives). Call a friend or family member who makes you laugh while limiting those who make you feel negative after you talk. Laughter truly *is* the best medicine.



When all else fails, email a member of our clinical team (contacts on [page 5](#)), and if needed you can also set a virtual appointment. We promise to listen and offer any help that we can (*and we won't judge your noises in the background, house, bedhead or pajamas.*)



Parent Self-Care (by: Dr. Joanna Wheeler, School Psychologist, Liberty MS)

As a parent or caregiver your role is crucial for ensuring the well-being of students. During this time, in addition to being caregivers, your role expanded suddenly to include facilitating the online learning process. It's a lot to juggle, and it's normal, at times, to feel overwhelmed and stressed. Taking time for yourself is often easier said than done, but below, are some tips and strategies to take care of yourself and manage stress.

Take time to recognize the signs of stress. Signs of stress may include the following: increase or decrease in energy levels, irritability, trouble sleeping or relaxing, crying easily, and having difficulty concentrating or remembering things.

Be realistic! Let go of the idea that learning at home and school will look similar. Family life gets complicated, and some days may not follow your devised schedule. That's okay. Just get back on track when you can!

Make a few choices daily that will be beneficial to your long-term physical and mental health. Trying to eat properly, exercising, prioritizing sleep, and taking some quiet time are all ways to improve your health over time.

Give yourself some down time after a stressful activity and try following a stressful activity with a more enjoyable activity.

Talking about your feelings related to COVID-19, sharing reliable health information, and discussing the struggles and positives of online education with friends and family may increase your coping ability. Stay connected!

Visualize a quiet place.

Read.

Drink water.

Do the "Downward Facing Dog" pose. The Downward Facing Dog pose activates several muscles in the arms, legs, and core.

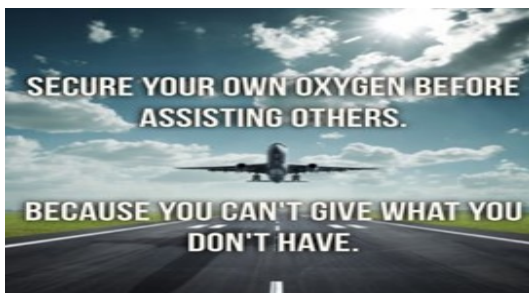
This stretch helps muscles begin to burn additional blood glucose that is made available by the body's fight or flight response.

Jump. Set a timer for 2 minutes, put on some music.

Listen to music and take a drive in your car- by yourself.



Just remember that challenging times are bound to arise, and therefore, the practice of self-care should be given a place within our lives.





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"People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing - that's why we recommend it daily"
- Zig Ziglar

(by: Kim Picinich School Psychologist Liberty MS)

First and foremost, be kind to yourselves. You aren't just working, and your children aren't just learning, from home. You are trying to work, and your children are trying to learn IN a pandemic, from home. Our schedules and our daily lives abruptly changed. You are doing the best you can! Below are some ideas to help create and maintain routine and stability in your home.

Start each day with gratitude. Are you healthy? Are your children safe? Taking 3 minutes a day to reflect on the things you are thankful for has amazing benefits including more positive emotions, better sleep and stronger immune systems. Easy ways to make this a daily practice? Designate a time of day as a family to share 3 things each of you are grateful for. Or, pick a time of day to write it down in a journal or notebook. Maybe choose a family member to find a positive quote each day and share it.

Move your body daily. Daily exercise and fresh air can make a big positive difference in our physical and mental health right now. Scheduling outside time and/or exercise into your daily routine ensures it will happen every day and it will give everyone something to look forward to.

Create a visual daily family schedule. Begin with waking up, eating breakfast, and getting dressed. There is great power in getting dressed for the day. It helps get our brains mentally prepared for the activity ahead. When it's time for exercise, change into workout clothes and once again, you are helping to stick with a routine and transition to the next activity. Research shows that how we feel can be affected by what we wear and so when we get out of our pajamas and sweats, we are often more attentive and more productive.

Re-evaluate your child's workspace. Have a conversation about it. Are they too distracted where they are? Find a space you all agree helps them be the most focused and productive.

Add FUN into your family schedule. Make sure to add breaks, exercise, dinner, and fun into your schedule and gather input from the family.

Sleep. Try to stick to relatively normal bed time routines to ensure you and your children are getting enough rest. Sleep during this time is critical as it helps our mental health, improves our mood, increases our brain function and even helps our immune system.

Be Flexible. Some days are going to be amazing and some days are going to be hard. Maintaining a routine will help provide stability, predictability and safety during this challenging time. That said, be flexible and enjoy the moment. If an after-lunch backyard break turns into 3 hours of outdoor games, reading, or gardening with your family, savor every moment and call it a win!



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Healthy Sleep Hygiene

BEFORE BEDTIME	<p>Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bedtime</p>	<p>Avoid heavy meals within two hours of bedtime</p>	<p>Avoid energetic exercise within three hours of bedtime</p>
GETTING READY TO SLEEP	<p>Develop a bedtime ritual so that your body knows you are getting ready to go to sleep</p>	<p>Reduce extreme light, temperature, and noise in your bedroom</p>	<p>Include an hour of quiet time before bed such as reading, watching TV or listening to music</p>
SLEEP TIME	<p>Keep your sleep regular - same bedtime, same rise time. Aim for 8 hours of sleep each night.</p>	<p>Bedrooms are <u>ONLY</u> for sleep. How many screens do you have in your bedroom?</p>	<p>If you can't sleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something boring until you feel tired, then try again.</p>

Remember everyone has nights where they can't sleep. The more you worry, the worse this worry can become.

Adjusting to Distant Learning

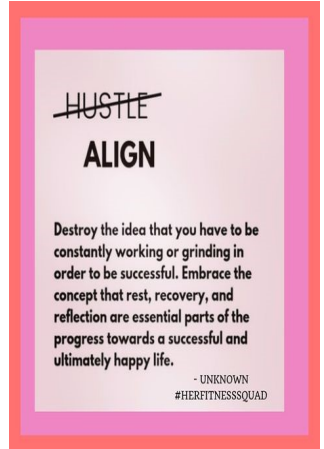
Helping Your Middle Schooler Adjust to Distant Learning

(by: Kim Picinich School Psychologist Liberty MS)

As adults, we are still adjusting to our new schedules, work environments and new technologies. Likewise, our children are also adjusting to their new school schedules, new ways of learning through online virtual classrooms, and new ways of completing their assignments for school. Many do not yet feel competent navigating their online classes and assignments and that is OK. This is a process and it will take time. Here are some skills you can focus on that will increase their confidence and independence during distance learning.

Functional communication: Is your child able to communicate and

seek out help when they need it? Reaching out to their teacher, to you, to a friend when they can't find an assignment, or aren't sure about what is due is critical right now and one of the biggest challenges for students and teachers at this time. It's easier to simply turn the computer off or say there were internet issues rather than proactively search for help. Talk with your child and ask them if they know when their teachers' office hours are and if they've ever accessed them? Have them practice sending emails to their teachers. Encourage them to email, text, or call a friend if they are unsure of an assignment.

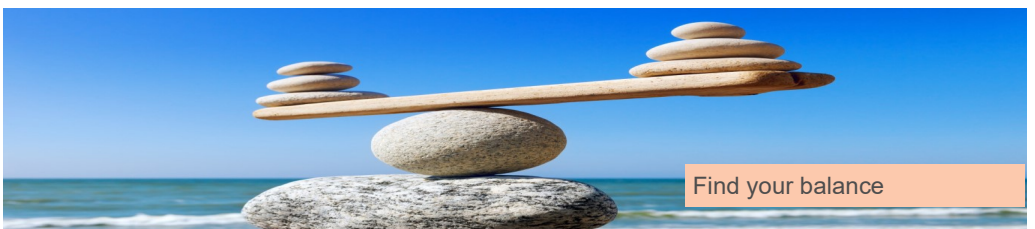


Organization and Planning: Does your child have a solid

understanding of their assignments due and their online class schedule? Are they able to create a plan/schedule each day for school? Consider whether your child needs to print out or write out their class schedules and assignments each morning, or better yet, the night before. Encourage them to continue to use their daily agendas. If you have a dry erase board, this might also be an easy way for your child to write down their individual schedule each day. Brainstorming ways your child can break down their work for the week into steps each day will support their **planning** process. Ask questions about what assignment is due first, what will take the most time, and what is most challenging for them to help them **prioritize** their assignments.

Attention and Focus: Is your child able to maintain their focus while

participating in online classes and completing work? This is not easy and requires discipline and self-monitoring for not only our children, but for us as well. Little changes can make big differences to support our focus and attention. Get dressed and eat breakfast before online classes and schoolwork. Sit at the table instead of on the couch. Work in a well-lit area. Decide on an amount of time to work, before taking a break and write down that schedule. Talk with your child about creating a schedule in a way that works best for them. If math requires the most focus, complete that first and get it out of the way.





Activity Ideas

It is easy to run out of ideas to do during this quarantine time. It often seems like more of the same day in and day out. Try some activities that you have not done in a while! Make a bucket list of what you would like to do while quarantined!

Try these ideas:

- Puzzle, board games
- Reorganize your room
- Picnic
- Cook together
- Teach yourself a foreign language
- Learn to play an instrument
- Write letters to send in snail mail
- Learn about what your grandparent was like as a child
- Do a time capsule
- Try on your clothes, pack up the ones that don't fit or you will not wear for donation
- Download some books to read
- Learn to knit or crochet
- Video chat with family and friends
- Do some home workouts (numerous videos online)
- Write children book
- Camp in the yard with a tent
- "camp" in the living room with popcorn and movies
- Learn how to braid
- Learn how to change a car tire
- go on a family bike ride
- go fishing
- Teach your dog some tricks
- Make a bucket list for when you are out of quarantine

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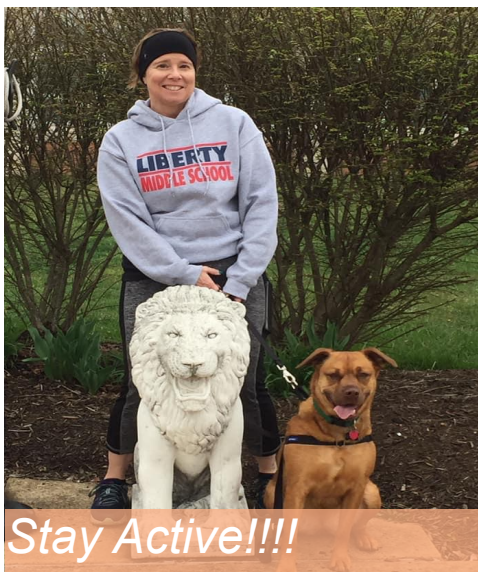
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Free Websites

- Virtual tours of museums, zoos and national parks
- Learn to play an instrument or to code
- Learn a new language
- Workouts
- Explore outer space



Stay Active!!!!