



Counsellor's Corner



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District Outreach Counsellor

A virtual, "Hello!" to all School District #71 families! Know that you are being thought of and cared about from a distance and we can't wait to see your children's faces and be surrounded by their energy again.

Taken from an unknown source out in meme-land:

"Someone should have told me in 2020 I would be my child's personal assistant.

Me: *Good morning, you have two zoom meetings today at 10 AM and 3 PM then a video call with grandma after lunch.*

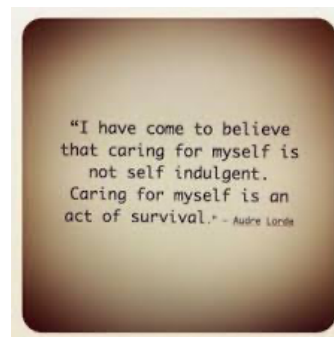
Kid: *OK, cancel the 3 PM and ask grandma if she can video chat before lunch. How are you coming on the spreadsheet of the 18 different website names and passwords?*

Me: *Still working on it. Here is your snack and the copies that you needed for your report. They are due tomorrow.*

Kid: *Thank you. Please leave them outside my fort. And let's pencil in some time to discuss dinner plans."*

Oh wow – sound familiar? How are you surviving all of this? I'm trying to talk to as many families as I can and I recognize the stressors of uncertainty, money, loud kids with cabin fever, school expectations and trying to be a teacher and a parent at the same time, all while managing a household and trying to maintain some semblance of sanity.

Please know this: it's okay to set your boundaries. If it's too much for you, just say so. If you can't do all the Teams meetings and projects, check-ins and assignments, just let us know. In the typical brick-and-mortar style of learning, teachers adjust their expectations based on the temperature of the group...without face-to-face, teachers are giving it their best guess at what you and your children need, while trying to make the learning meaningful and purposeful. The biggest wish we have right now as staff is for you to stay in touch. Let us know how you are doing and what you need for your kids. Email your teacher/school counsellor/principal/music teacher/ISW – whomever you feel you have a good connection with and let us know how you are doing and how we can help!

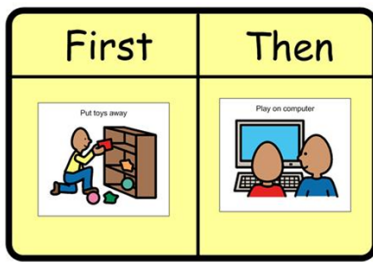


This morning I went running outside when I heard our mail-person drive up so I could sit on the grass a few metres away and randomly chat with her as she loaded the mailboxes. When have I ever had time to do that? I tend to be more of an introvert, so this situation had me reflect on what I need right now: connection. So, my goal for the next few days will be to reach out to have some meaningful distance-connection with close friends. Take some time to consider what you need right now. What will help you to feel accomplished/safe/important/productive? So many people are feeling exhausted and unmotivated right now – what is one small thing you can do to help you feel like you moved forward today?

To all of you and your children: I hope we can continue to thrive through this, rather than look out our windows and count the days until we can start to function again. How can we help you do that? I'm sure you've been seeing endless articles on tips and strategies, but I will share a few that are my favourites from my personal experience as a mom:

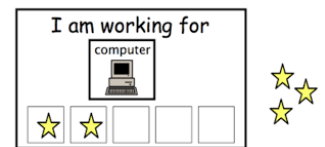
- Community is everything; find your hive and be part of it either over the phone, computer, visiting from across the street with your neighbours. There's something about the human voice and familiarity that is soothing and healing. I've read that the reason birds chirp in the morning is to let their mate know that they made it through the night – a way of announcing, "I am here – I am okay!" How can you announce, "I am here! I am okay!" to your hive and listen for their reply?
- Have a schedule. That doesn't mean everyone has to be up at the breakfast table by 7 am, but have a schedule that starts with purpose, then a break, then purpose, etc. Help provide that for your children as well.
- Have one small productive task to accomplish every day for each member of the family: it can be "Today you are going to go through your sock drawer and bring me every sock with a hole in it." Or, "Today everyone is going to clean their bedroom windows – inside and out." Keep it short and easy; at the end of the week it will be so rewarding to see how much has been accomplished!
- Do one thing outside every day: eat dinner in the yard, go for a social – distancing walk, mow the lawn...whatever gets you some fresh air and sun.
- Consider limiting the amount of news you are watching if you find it affects your mood and outlook.
- Have a "down time" every day when everyone gets some alone time in their rooms...for the sake of everyone's sanity.

Finally, some "Education 101" tips – for the parents who "just can't get my kid to do anything!" Here are some basic teacher-tips that help us get kids working through the day.



1. First-then: First-then is a chart that we use with kids. On the left, put the first task to be completed (this will be a non-preferred task, or in other words, something your child probably doesn't want to do). On the right, put the preferred task that follows (something your child does want to do). Set the schedule for your day this way so that the child can see what is ahead. Make the non-preferred task *small* chunks of work that are age appropriate and do-able. For non-readers, use PICS (pictures) that they help you draw or that you print off the internet to represent different activities.

2. Tracking Charts: Create a homemade version of the chart as pictured to the right. Let your child choose a "reward" to work toward (computer games time, having a dessert-first night, whatever will motivate them to buy into the behaviours you are trying to reinforce. This shouldn't cost you money or be a huge inconvenience to anyone else in the home). Let them know what activities help them to earn a star (emptying the dishwasher, completing their homework, etc.).
3. Chunk work assignments into manageable parts (e.g. "Let's just do 5 questions and then take a break.")
4. Offer to connect with the teacher if your child is rising up and arguing about your methods of help (I think all parents have heard the, "But that's not how Ms. X teaches it!!!!" Teachers are happy to provide some coaching, perhaps in Microsoft Teams or a more familiar application to you. Your child will benefit and you can listen in on how the lesson is delivered.



Be well, families! Stay safe and know that you are enough! Reach out if you need help – we are here for you !

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