

Parents = the Difference

****News Flash — Number 4****

I admit it. There are days I forget to breathe. So much to keep up with . . . so much to do. Falling in bed at night feels like the only escape. I say this to send a message—you are not alone. This is a trying time, however I am hearing about glimpses of silver linings peeking through the clouds. This forced quarantine is family time we never expected. Yes, it is hectic. Yes, we are on top of each other. Yes, patience wears thin at times, but when was the last time you sat down together and had regular family meals? How about having time every night to read a bedtime story and kiss your child to sleep? Our previous lives often stole these precious family moments. I predict we will miss some of this when our lives return to normal (or is it too early to predict that?)

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Stop the Quarantine! I Want to Get Off!

"Too many links! So many video meetings! Not another App! Who can keep track? Stop!" This is what I'm hearing from parents. Those of you with more than one school-aged child by far have it the hardest.

My impression: everyone is scrambling! Teachers are mandated to teach daily; morning meetings, read alouds, etc. Big Zoom and Google classroom meetings make it difficult to create personal connections with children. Many teachers are conducting small groups and even one-on-ones. So now you have added secretary to your growing list of duties!

Teachers are all too aware of the burdens they are inadvertently adding to your life. My sense is we are in the middle of a process that has to play out before we get it right. If any opportunity arises for your feedback, please speak up! It is challenging finding a "new normal." It is equally as challenging finding what works.

I am hearing growing concern about how this forced isolation affects your child's social development. In the past, you didn't have to think much about it. You knew your child was interacting with other children and working on social skills at school.

I have the privilege of sitting in morning meetings, a time meant to promote social engagement. I am observing a fair amount of disengagement. I see children trying to make

sense of the notion that their friends faces live in little boxes on the computer. I recently heard about a parent who walked her son by his school with the intent of making it clear no one was there only to hear, "Mommy! The school is right there. Why can't we go in?" Yes, some children understand and actively engage in virtual large group meetings, but many others appear bored, distracted, tired, irritable, angry, moody, anxious, shy, confused, preoccupied with breakfast, blank-faced, or nowhere to be found! Some children who always had their hand up in the classroom are shunning the virtual one. It is hard for teachers to promote social engagement through a screen. It is hard for our children to interact with their friends in meaningful ways.

The problem is how to connect children so their social skills continue to develop? We know language is not a young child's primary means of communication. It is play. Virtual play for 4 year-olds is proving to be cumbersome and developmentally confusing. It is hard for them to have meaningful telephone conversations, so we can rule out phone chats.

Since we have all become Zoom/Google classroom experts, you might consider setting up a virtual playdate with one of your child's favorite classmates. It might be doing a physical activity (big muscle activities) together; or showing toys to each other; or sharing a project they've been working on with a parent. It's time to think outside of the box.

HEY DAD, CAN I TAKE THE GAS CAN FOR THE LAWN MOWER OUT IN THE BACK YARD?



WHAT ON EARTH FOR? IT'S 8:00 AT NIGHT!



I WANT TO POUR GASOLINE IN BIG LETTERS ON THE LAWN...

.. AND SET FIRE TO IT SO AIRPLANES CAN READ IT AS THEY FLY OVER!



NO, YOU CAN'T DO THAT! DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!



I DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT HE INTENDED TO WRITE.



Talking to Young Children about COVID-19

How do you talk to a young child about COVID-19? You don't want to cause worry, but they are hearing about it and have formulated some kind of a narrative in their heads about what it is and what it means. They are surely wondering if they will catch it too.

The number one consideration when you talk to your child about COVID-19 is being developmentally appropriate, but what does that exactly mean? Here are a few things to consider. Think about what your child has already seen and heard. Have they seen people wearing masks? Are they exposed to news programs? Who in the house is talking about it? What are they saying? How do household members feel about the situation?

The balance lies between giving your child helpful fact-based information while reassuring them you will keep them safe. You don't want to tell them more than they need to know. Ask your child what they already know and what they want to know. Keep responses simple. Pause and see what your child says next. Don't let your nerves drive the conversation. It's OK if you don't have all the answers. What matters most is your reassuring tone. If your family has suffered a loss, this will certainly be part of the conversation.

Go to feelings. Ask your child how they feel. This is often difficult for little ones who typically answer, 'mad, sad, happy, etc.' If it isn't natural for your child to identify and discuss their feelings, try talking through a stuffed animal. Ask his favorite stuffed animal how he feels about the virus, staying at home all day, not seeing his friends, etc. Ask the stuffy about its fears, fantasies, etc. It is often easier for a young child to talk about their feelings through a toy than it is to have a direct on-the-spot conversation with an adult.

As you talk to your child, keep check of your own feelings and anxieties. Children are experts at reading the feelings of the people who care for them. If you are noticeably nervous, your child will be too. That doesn't mean you aren't allowed to have feelings. Rather it means that when you talk with them about it, ensure that you are in a calm place mentally.

So what do you say exactly? You know your child better than anyone in the world, so you will find the words that are right for him or her. The general message would be something along the lines of—yes, some people are getting sick because it is really easy to catch the germs. That's why we get to have so much family time together! All the children get to stay home with their families right now. You might want to frame it as a kind of flu, and if kids get it, they get better really fast. Assure your child that it is OK to ask you anything. After all, isn't that what parents are for?

let's move



Gross and fine motor skills challenge

<https://www.facebook.com/NewDecoration0/videos/831232830618709/>



I want to ride my bicycle. I want to ride my bike. Queen Peloton bikes!

<https://www.facebook.com/TheTracyEffect/videos/10156851800745143/>

Animal walks to **calm kids** and develop gross motor skills

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vywo8eUk1Dc>

Preschool Activities with Painting Tape

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYy9oKC8C3s>

Directions: Roll one die for each of the columns. Perform the activity that matches the number rolled.

	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5
1 	10 jumping jacks	Wiggle your whole body for a count of 10.	Bring R elbow to L knee and L elbow to R knee 5 times	Jump in place 10 times.	Rub your entire R arm with your L hand
2 	Squeeze your R hand firmly with your L hand	5 wall push ups	Move the upper half of your body	Spin in a circle 3 times to the right	Touch L hand to bottom of R foot. Repeat 5x.
3 	Move the right side of your body	Spread legs apart and bend at waist looking between knees. Repeat 5x.	Make 10 small circles with your arms	10 jumps over a pencil on floor	Give yourself a big hug for 10 seconds
4 	Rub your entire L arm with your R hand	Touch R hand to bottom of L foot. Repeat 5x.	Twist at the waist 10 times with arms out to the side	Spin in a circle 3 times to the left	Make 10 large circles with your arms
5 	Touch R hand to L shoulder. Touch L hand to R shoulder. Repeat 5x	March in place with knees high for a count of 10	Squeeze your L hand firmly with your R hand	Move the left side of your body	Touch R hand to L foot and then L hand to R foot 5 times
6 	Run in place for a count of 15	Move the lower half of your body	Touch hands overhead and try to balance on one foot for 5 seconds.	Tap your feet on the floor while making small circles with fingers for 10 sec.	Take 10 deep breaths