

Routine, exercise, social contact, and talking to your child about COVID-19

Create Structure/Make a Schedule

- Children and teenagers do best when they have plans for each day.
- Structure helps children feel safe, feel happy, and behave better... Even if they say they don't want it!
- Routines and rules that are consistent, predictable, and have follow-through throughout the week will help everyone in the home feel a bit better.
- Some things to include in your schedule:
 - Setting a regular bedtime and wake-up time
 - Meals
 - Changing out of your pajamas(!)
 - Establishing a school-day (work-time) schedule
 - Building in play time/relaxing time
 - Social contact (texting, Facetime, etc.)
 - Chores
 - Physical activity
- Be compassionate and flexible with yourself as well. Sometimes even with the most perfectly planned schedule, we will have hiccups.
 - Remember our children need breaks and it is okay to divide the schoolwork into time periods – for example, working for 30 minutes and having a 10-minute break.
 - Also, create a set time every day in which children can use their phones, computers, and tablets for fun. That way, they don't become too focused on them.
- Here's a sample routine template, and a blank one for your use:
<https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/activities/activities-structure.html>
- To learn more about making new home routines:
<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/schools-closed-how-to-make-a-new-home-routine>

Exercise and Social Contact

- Many of our North Hudson Academy students have mentioned that among the things they miss most are playing in the gym and speaking to their friends. Physical activity and social connection is important for people of all ages, especially children and teenagers.

Exercise

- Get your body moving! Exercise has been linked to lower anxiety and sadness, and generally feeling happier and calmer. It is also associated with better sleep and better quality of life. Ideas for physical activity include jumping jacks, sit-ups, yoga poses, jump rope, stretches, taking a walk around the block or to the park (maintaining social distance!), hiking, dancing or working out to an exercise video on YouTube.
- Playing games like hide-and-seek, animal races (hopping like a frog or waddling like a duck), Simon Says, practicing karate, and doing a scavenger hunt are a few ways to help our youngsters play and exercise at the same time.
- At school, we listen to fun movement songs that you can find on YouTube too.
 - Cosmic Kids – Yoga, Movement, and Meditation
<https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/>
 - Go Noodle – Movement/Dance
<https://www.gonoodle.com/good-energy-at-home-kids-games-and-videos/good-energy-at-home-more-2/>
 - Simple exercises you and your teenagers can do at home:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/style/self-care/isolation-exercise-meditation-coronavirus.html>

Social Contact

- Regarding social contact, thank goodness for cell phones! Feeling socially connected and being able to express yourself to friends is very important. Phone contact through calling, texting, videochatting, co-playing/live-gaming, and “Netflix Parties” (watch Netflix with your friends online). Children can also try pen pals. It isn’t the same as spending time with friends in person, but it’s something! And it maintains important peer connections.
- As parents, encourage appropriate use of phones, laptops, and tablets to speak with friends, limiting the time they’re on their electronics if needed and using parental controls to make sure they’re viewing appropriate material.

Speaking to your children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus):

- Some of our families have expressed how anxious and confused their children are about the current Coronavirus situation.
- Don't be afraid to discuss COVID-19 -- not talking about it can actually make children more stressed because they will have no information to go on, and might instead only rely on inaccurate, "scary" information that they've heard from friends or seen online.
- It's important to be developmentally-appropriate with your child. This means what you share with an eight-year-old child will be different from what you share with a 16-year-old teenager. With our students, it is also important to keep in mind any special needs they may have, such as comprehension, processing, emotional, and attention concerns. Not all 16-year-olds are the same!
- Allow them to share their feelings. Listen to them without judgment, while remaining calm. Be reassuring that they are safe.
- Empower your child to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. They are superheroes too!

We've compiled some resources to help with the conversation:

- (For younger children): <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- (For teenagers): <https://childmind.org/article/supporting-teenagers-and-young-adults-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>
- (Quick tips): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>
- Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease (Page 4 - Reactions according to age group and the best ways caregivers can respond): https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf