
Supporting Your Child's Emotional Needs at Home

May 1, 2020

Presenting Today:

Kerri Dunn, *Guidance Counsellor*

Krista Koekkoek, *Director of Guidance*

Today's Agenda:

1. Humanity & Relationships First
 2. Need: Safety
 3. Need: Belonging
 4. Need: Love
 5. + Academics@Home
 6. Q & A
-

“When physical distancing is deemed necessary, social and emotional connectedness is even more critical.”

~Karen Niemi, [CASEL](#)

You Know Your Family Best

- What does your family need?
- We are challenged right now; this is a moment of big feelings
- Consider what matters most to your family (your values)
- We can learn from each other and the research

You are Human

- How are you feeling?
 - Constant low-level anxiety
 - Loss/Grief
 - Adrenaline, Fatigue
- There is no right way to be during this time
- Ensure you are taking time to take care of yourself.

You are a Parent

- You are not their classroom teacher
- You are in charge of your household
- Parents are the first Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) role models.
- This is not how we normally parent, so there is no right way

Grounding

Grounding is:

- Coming into your body
- Getting out of your head/thoughts/emotions
- Connecting with the here and now
- Creating a pause/space (so much patience required right now!)
- The opportunity to respond the way you want to

Grounding

- **How to do that?**

- *Example: Your morning routine*

- Engage your senses

- Take a moment to do things such as smell your coffee, listen to the birds, appreciate your environment, take a few deep breaths

- *Example: Notice X*

- Pick one object, a part of your body, your child's eyes, etc. and get curious about it

What do our kids need? Safety, Belonging & Love.



Our children need to feel safe

- **Simplicity; it's a time to go back to the basics**
 - Healthy food, water
 - Fresh air/nature, movement
 - Sleep
 - Grace (love them no matter what)
 - Fun
 - Hearing that this, too, will pass
- **Routines** (consistency creates psychological safety, calm and connection, decreases decision-making)
 - Co-create routines (ex. What does our morning routine look like?)
 - Post them
 - Don't let a schedule/routine interfere with your relationship

Our children need to feel safe

- **Create stability**
 - Asking your child what makes them feel safe?
 - Acknowledgement: turn towards them
 - Some kids and parents need a 'safe base': where can they go in the house when overwhelmed?
 - Alone time is important.
 - Respecting personality types
- **Create a list of off-screen coping strategies:**
 - Quick options they can choose from
 - Join them in trying these strategies. It can help us, too!
 - Practice and model your own coping strategies for them

Our children need to feel that they belong

- **Notice and comment on the positive**
 - When they are really trying?
 - Avoid sarcasm as a way to modify behaviour
- **Promote social connection**
 - What satisfies your kids?
 - How could you do it together?
 - Ask them about it! (What is Fortnite/TikTok/MJ Documentary?)
- **Being Online**
 - Research is focusing less on the amount of time we spend online but instead who we are with and what we are doing.
 - Have off screen experiences
 - Ask: “Is it interfering with normal development?” (sleep, eating, family responsibilities, etc.)

Our children need to feel loved

- **Notice and ask about feelings** (yours and your children's)
 - All feelings are healthy and normal
 - Naming them is an important step
 - Validate feelings without trying to change them
 - "I am listening to you. This is really hard. I hear how you feel. These emotions are completely normal and reasonable."
 - How do you talk about challenging feelings?
 - Do you model when you feel uncomfortable feelings?
 - Reminder: Feelings don't need fixing and we don't want to be alone with them
 - Buried feelings become more of a problem; try not to minimize
Examples:
~~"It's going to be fine"~~ -> "That makes sense given what's going on."
~~"Don't worry about it"~~ -> "I hear you. How can I best support you?"

Our children need to feel loved

- Our children **need our love, touch and presence** more than ever
 - Unwanted behaviour is usually call for connection
- **Continue build trust and intimacy**
 - We have to love the kids we have, not the kids we want to have.
 - Love is not contingent on achievement (but they think it is!)
 - Listen, listen, listen. Try to stop talking. Listening feels like love.
- **Joy is healing, builds resiliency and increases coping**
 - Try to point out “momentary experiences of positive emotion that make us smile and laugh”
 - Joy vs. Happiness (We don’t have to be happy to feel joy)

And then there are teenagers...

- Are your teenagers isolating, ignoring you, resisting, pushing back on rules, struggling with motivation, on an emotional roller coaster...or just plain angry/sad?
 - NORMAL. NORMAL. NORMAL.
 - More concerning if they're not.
- Are these impeding your relationship with them/their responsibilities? Potential suggestions:
 - Intentionally re-establish your connection
 - Ask them what they need from you instead of reminding them what you don't need
 - Share with them the non-negotiables for you as the adult
 - Find a common ground
 - This may require both sides to give and take (parenting may need to change more so given the climate)

Safety, Belonging & Love and Schoolwork

Parental Responsibilities

- Design a learning schedule that works for you and your family
- Establish which adult is the point person that day/time and post it
- Allow teachers/school to be content experts
- Allow, don't fix, your child's mistakes
- Show empathy & flexibility: your child's world is upside down

Student Responsibilities

- Own their academic work and outcomes and meet their familial responsibilities
- Reach out to teacher/school supports when they have content and assignment questions.
- Follow the learning schedule established, and make choices within that (what they work on, where they work, breaks, what snacks they have, etc.)
- Prioritize their own self care (sleep, social connections, movement, etc.)

Safety, Belonging, Love and Schoolwork

- **Your response matters**

- If you groan, they will groan. If you show excitement, they will be more open
- Ask for their own self-evaluation - “how hard are you working?”
- Research:
 - Picking at mistakes vs. “I’m here for questions; you’ve got this!”
 - Kinder responses predict more successful outcomes!!

“

RELATIONSHIPS before rigor

GRACE before grades

PATIENCE before programs

LOVE before lessons

Brad Johnson
EDUCATOR

edutopia

Available school support:

- Your child should start with their teacher first
- Next, your child's homeform teacher (JS) / advisor (SS)
- ["Where can I go for extra support"](#)
- Academic Support Department
 - [Junior School](#)
 - [Senior School](#)
- Guidance Department
 - Guidance Counsellor (JS) ([Mrs. Reid](#))
 - Academic Counsellors (SS) ([Mr. Bailey](#), [Mr. Brooks](#), [Ms. Dunn](#), [Ms. Koekkoek](#))
 - Social-Emotional Counsellors (SS) ([Ms. Dunn](#), [Ms. Koekkoek](#))
- School Leadership
 - [Jennifer Wyatt, Head of Junior School](#)
 - [Kristopher Churchill, Head of Senior School](#)
 - [Jennifer Paziuk, Dean of Academic & Student Support](#)

Q & A

References/Resources

Berinato, S. (2020, March 23). That Discomfort You're Feeling Is Grief. Harvard Business Review.

<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>

Brackett, M. A. (2019). Permission to feel: Unlocking the power of emotions to help our kids, ourselves, and our society thrive.

Damour, L (2020, April 29) Well: How I Deal: Teens Talk Coronavirus [Webinar]. In The New York Times Event. Retrieved from

<https://timestevents.nytimes.com/teens0429/>

Denworth, L (2019, November). Social Media Has Not Destroyed A Generation. Scientific American. Retrieved from

<https://lydiadenworth.com/articles/social-media-has-not-destroyed-a-generation/>

Fettel Lee, I. (2018). Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness. US: Little, Brown Spark

Lahey, J., & Lahey, J. (2015). The gift of failure: how the best parents learn to let go so their children can succeed. Unabridged. [United States]: HarperAudio.

Miller, J. (2020, April 3). So Now What? Support SEL at Home featuring Jennifer Miller. Confident Parents, Confident Kids,

[Webinar]. In CASEL Cares Initiative. Retrieved from <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CASEL-CARES-Webinar-II.pdf>

Social Emotional Learning. Edutopia. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning>

Weingarten, R. (April 2020) 20 Great Questions to ask instead of "How are you doing right now?" Retrieved from

<https://qz.com/work/1836105/20-great-questions-to-ask-instead-of-how-are-you-doing-right-now/>