



Skills for @ Home Learning
What we've learned so far...



Introduction

Have you been putting out emotional “fires” at home lately? As we approach the next week, let’s explore some of the underlying issues that may be causing emotional fires in you or your children. Do you have a plan for when you are experiencing the same social isolation, frustration, fear, anxiety and sadness that your children are...plus grownup concerns about running out of food, work, bills, loved ones in the “high risk” group and more? How will you react when your brain is in fight or flight mode? Without thought or planning, we risk lashing out at our loved ones and not only disrupting our routine but also our foundation of trust. But what if we simply planned for those moments and discussed how we were going to cool down with our families? We could have the chance to bring our best selves to most testing times in life. This issue will give you some ideas and strategies to help you manage your own thoughts and emotions in healthy ways and give you steps to create an Emotional Safety Plan.

The Stress Response

Anytime you are emotionally shaken from fear, anxiety, anger or hurt, your brain downshifts to the reactionary center of your brain and activates a stress response. During the stress response, there are chemicals that wash over the rest of your brain and cut off access to the control center for problem solving which is where you can find your logic, creativity, reasoning, and helpful language. This “hijacking” of your brain is the reason why our inner T Rex comes out!

The Difference Is the PAUSE

Children co-regulate with trusted adults, so an unregulated adult cannot regulate an unregulated child. Our calm nurtures their calm. Our distress increases their distress. Consistently check in and ask yourself, “How am I doing?” Spend some time thinking about what happens in your body when you start to feel upset. Does your heart pound faster or your stomach churn? What helps you notice those feelings and remain calm?

There are as many techniques as there are parents, so it is important that you have a personal list of “go to” strategies. Articulating how you are using self-control, particularly when it involves your children, can turn a difficult moment into a teaching opportunity for both of you.

“In-The-Moment "Calming Ideas:

- **Deep Belly Breathing-**

1. Focus on your belly, the lower part of the stomach. Imagine a small balloon inside.
2. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, imagine the balloon inflating. Hold a few seconds.
3. Slowly exhale through your mouth, imagining the balloon gently deflating. Blow out of your mouth as if you were blowing out a candle.
4. Repeat at least three times. TIP: Place a hand over your belly to feel it go up and down, and make sure you're not breathing with your chest.

- **Strange Calm-** sit down in the midst of chaos to regain your centered focus. Escalation of the emotional drama either by yelling, punishing or getting upset is expected by kids. But what if you sat down in the middle of it, shut your eyes and became quiet?

- **Drop the Rope-** avoid the emotional “tug-of-war” and back-and-forth bickering. Simply stop, let go, and walk away. Go to a safe place where you can take deep breaths and avoid the power struggle. Remember, it's ok to be a 2nd to last person. Come back to resolve the issue when you are calm.

- **Repeat this mantra-** while taking deep breaths: “I'm safe, I'm calm, I can handle this.”



Spot Your Thoughts

Did you know that your thoughts can impact your behavior? Stress comes from our perception of a situation. Technically, the actual situation is not stressful; it is our PERCEPTION that makes it stressful.

Talk Back to Unhelpful Thoughts!

- **Evaluate the situation on a scale of 0-10.** Think again about partial success and reevaluate, on a scale of 0-10.
- **Break down big problems into smaller parts.** Imagine putting each cause of stress inside separate plastic containers. Now visualize closing the lids. Segmenting challenges decrease stress because it spurs the realization problems can be dealt with individually, while the rest can be "stored" for another time.
- **Focus on all of the positive things that went right.**

Add "yet" to the End of Self-Defeating Thoughts

When so many of our own thoughts begin with words like "I never" or "I can't," we close the door for progress. Add the transformative word "yet" to the end of your thoughts. "I can't solve this problem" becomes "I can't solve this problem YET." Hope and possibility are then restored with one simple word.

WHAT TO TELL MYSELF WHEN I'M FEELING DISCOURAGED

1. This is **tough** But so am I.
2. I may not be able to control this situation. But I am **in charge** of how I respond.
3. I haven't figured this out...**yet.**
4. This challenge is here to teach me something.
5. All I need to do is take it one step at a time. **Breathe.** And do the next right thing.

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WEEKLY HELPFUL HINT:

Each component of stress impacts the other. If you can intervene at one of these points, you can stop the cycle of stress.

Write out your own emotional safety plan (feel free to cut this one out), and keep it somewhere to remind you to use it when needed.

My Emotional Safety Plan

I know that my children learn to manage emotions from my modeling when I am angry and anxious. I know my child will act in the same way I can when they are stressed. Having a plan ready and rehearsed will help me model how I want to teach them to handle their emotions.

When I am angry or have high anxiety, I will say...(keep it short!)

Then I will go...(describe specific place) to cool down.

When I get to my cool down spot, I will...(describe calming strategies).

I will return to my family when...

I will prepare my family for this (as I would let know about any new routine) by telling them...

It is important to all of us at Pasadena ISD that you get the help you need and communication is vital. Please make sure to:

- Check the district and your child’s campus website/Facebook page daily
- Reach out to your child’s teacher(s), counselor, assistant principal or principal with issues you are struggling with or questions you have.

Feel free to let your campus know if there are any topics you would like our Behavior Response Team to address in future newsletters. We appreciate all suggestions.