



Office of Early Childhood

Mr. Ronald Lee, Superintendent Dr. Channing Conway, Assistant Superintendent

Monica Carmichael, Director of Early Childhood

2020 Fall Family Resource Newsletter



A Survival Guide for Parenting Through the Global Pandemic

by Sheree Dublin, Community & Parent Involvement Specialist

In December 2019, life as we know it has changed. Many of us had had our world turned upside down and forced into lives we never expected. As this new reality continues, many families are experiencing complex emotions.

Despite how we feel, there are guides to help parents navigate through these times.



First: Talk to Your Child about the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Talking to your child and answering any questions they have to reduce their feelings of anxiety sadness or confusion is important. The information should be given in a developmentally age appropriate way. It is common for children to hear inaccurate or misleading information from the media or their peers. When communicating with your children, focus on their feelings. Providing reassurance that they are safe that there are things they can do to remain safe. For younger children the *Inside Out Video* on you tube is an engaging video that teaches young children how to identify their feelings. Share stories about our essential workers and how they make a difference. The University of Florida "meet the helpers" is a great online resource that gives young children information on global pandemic helpers.

Second: We're All Home Together

It's important to model resilience with your child. Allow them to see and hear you remaining positive and optimistic. Encourage your children to connect socially with peers and extended family members. Allow various forms of communication including zoom, skype etc. Video-based communication (when possible) provide a more intimate social connection. Teaching your child the importance of using relaxation techniques such as belly breathing, is also important and helpful.

Lastly: Finding Meaning Through the Chaos

Remind yourself daily that this too shall pass. Take some time to care for yourself and your family in a special way. Engage in activities to reduce stress an encourage family time. These activities can include daily walks, family bike rides, movie nights, and story time. Ensuring your having adequate sleep, eating healthy meals, and exercising daily is extremely important during this crisis. Allow this moment to bring forth new memories for you and your family. Just Breath!

The Words Around Us! Supporting Writing At Home

by Nicole D'Emidio, Teaching Liaison

Young children often like to scribble, make marks that look like letters and play with writing. Here are some ways you can help your children learn about and practice writing at home.

1. Display children's writing in a special place

Hang your child's writing in a special place (refrigerator, door, mirror, etc.) or send their work to a family member or friend. This will tell your child that their writing is important and may encourage them to write more.

2. Write in front of your child and talk about it

When you write (making a shopping list, writing an email, completing an application or writing a note) explain what you are doing. This will tell your child that writing is useful and has meaning. Ask your child to add to the list or note.

3. Put writing materials in several locations around the house

Put pencils, crayons or markers in containers or baskets with paper, notepads or other materials in different rooms of the house (kitchen, living room, etc.) Encourage your child to write in different areas of your home. Be sure to remind them to write on the paper and nowhere else.



4. Take it outside

Let your child write or draw with chalk or old paintbrushes and water on the sidewalk and fences. Fill a backpack with writing tools and paper to take in the car or on walk while doing errands.

5. Encourage all writing efforts

Make writing an everyday part of your child's life at home! Their beginning writing and scribbles are important- they are the first step in learning to write.

Information from: <https://naeyc.org/our-work/families/support-writing-home>



6 Tips to Help Manage Healthy Tech Experiences for Preschoolers

by Melissa Bridgewater, Teaching Liaison

In a world where preschoolers are "growing up digital," it's important to help them learn healthy concepts of digital use and responsibility. In contrast to this, Research has shown that face-to-face time with family, and friends play a pivotal and even more important role in promoting a preschooler's learning and healthy development. Parents play an important role in teaching these skills.



1. **Make your own family media use plan.** When used thoughtfully and appropriately, media can enhance daily life. But when used inappropriately or without thought, media can displace many important activities such as face-to-face interaction, family-time, outdoor-play, exercise, unplugged downtime and sleep.

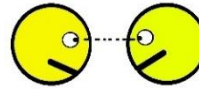


2. **Set limits and encourage playtime.** Media use, like all other activities, should have reasonable limits. Unstructured and offline play stimulates creativity. Make unplugged playtime a daily priority, especially for very young children.



3. **Screen time shouldn't always be alone time.** Co-view, co-play and co-engage with your children when they are using screens, which encourages social interactions, bonding, and learning.

Eye-Contact



4. **Know the value of face-to-face communication.** Very young children learn best through two-way communication. Engaging in back-and-forth "talk time" is critical for [language development](#).



5. **Create tech-free zones.** Keep [family mealtimes](#), other family and social gatherings screen free. Turn off televisions that you aren't watching, because background TV can get in the way of face-to-face time with kids.



6. **Don't use technology as an emotional pacifier.** Media can be very effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way they learn to calm down.

Remember, keep the face-to-face up front, and don't let it get lost behind a stream of media and tech. For additional information about healthy technology use for preschoolers.

Click on the following link:

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/technology-tips-for-preschool-parents>

<https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/6-tips-for-managing-your-kids-tech-time>



7 Tips for Managing Distance Learning in Preschool

by Tracy Davis, Preschool Intervention & Referral Team Member



Through play, children develop foundational social and emotional, executive functioning, and academic skills. Even as preschools have closed their doors and transitioned to remote learning, it is essential that these core principles remain. It is possible to work with families to establish play-based, child-centered learning that pushes beyond engaging with a screen—and instead giving families tools to foster learning at home.

7 WAYS TO MAKE DISTANCE LEARNING WORK IN PRESCHOOL

1. Let children guide you

2. Provide meaningful alternatives to screen time: Children between the ages of 2 and 7 are still in the preoperational stage, and it is developmentally inappropriate to expect their learning to be entirely screen-based.

3. Remember that families are your partners: Families are excellent allies and can support you by extending children's learning at home.

4. Remote relationship-building is critical: Relationships are the bedrock of our schools.

5. Music is magical: Children respond well to singing and dancing online.

6. Leverage your tech-savvy team members: Taking school online is a collective effort—any idea is worth trying.

7. Be kind to yourself: Previous metrics of success no longer apply. Measure your success in participation and smiles. We are all just doing our best.

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/7-tips-managing-distance-learning-preschool>

Teaching Emotional Literacy to Our Children

by Deanna Cosgrove, Preschool Intervention & Referral Team Member



Emotional literacy can be thought of as the ability to recognize and identify emotions as they come up, knowing how to regulate them, and to feel for others or exhibit empathy. According to The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), it is highly important in the development of a child's sense of wellbeing and is a predictor of future success. Children who are emotionally literate have better physical as well as mental health and tend to be more successful in school. Thus, emotional literacy is important. The Here are some ways to promote emotional literacy in our children.

1. Name the Feeling

Help your child name feelings by giving them labels. "We can't go outside and you are sad. You said you want to go outside." By naming a feeling it allows young children to develop an emotional vocabulary so they can talk about their feelings.

2. Talk About How Feelings Can Be Expressed

Lead by example. Talk about your own feelings and how you express those feelings. What do you do when you get mad? How do people know you are happy? Talk about ways that children can express their emotions.

3. Praise Your Child for Talking About Feelings

This shows that it is okay to talk about feelings. Talk about feelings when playing games, eating a meal or taking a walk. The more practice the better.

4. Help your Child with Self-Management

Teach your child that there is no feeling that is wrong. The important thing is what we do with a feeling, such as frustration. Show your child how to take a deep breath and describe the emotion at the forefront once he or she is calm. This can help to create space from the challenging emotion and form a connection to the senses, guiding your child through the moment. Children who develop the ability to regulate their emotions are able to make better choices about their behaviors. They might choose to walk away rather than hit or yell.

5. Share Your Own Feelings

Talk about your emotions throughout the day, using language your child will comprehend. For example, you could say, "I'm frustrated that we can't go out to the movies. Let's go for a walk instead. That will help my frustration." Children who grow up in environments where feelings are discussed become more aware of them and better able to express them in a forthright manner.

6. Show that the Mind and Body Are Linked

Illustrate to your child how emotions are tied to physical experiences. For example, fear can lead to sweaty palms and worry can lead to a tense back. This can help a child learn the full range of emotions and their physical connections, and it is a chance to bring emotions to the top, increasing self-awareness.

7. Show Your Child How to Live in the Moment

Have your child sit quietly and notice any thoughts that come to mind. This keeps the child in touch with the present and is called mindfulness. Next have your child relax specific parts of the body. According to research, children who practice mindfulness exhibit

higher executive functioning and are more in charge of their behaviors.

8. Use a Variety of Materials to Discuss Emotions

There are a multitude of materials that can be used to spark a discussion about feelings. Read children's books with your child that have characters who are going through something. Ask your child to describe his/her feelings about the situation in the story. Cut out pictures from magazines depicting people experiencing a variety of feelings. Ask your child what each person is feeling. Then ask your child to speculate about what might be causing the emotion.

Emotional literacy is a tremendous gift that you can give your child! It is also a tremendous gift that you can give yourself!



Helping Kids Cope While Sheltering in Place

by Renee Muneer, [Preschool Intervention & Referral Team Member](#)

What parents need to know regarding Shelter in Place:

- Try and establish a regular routine and schedule at home. Children are reassured by structure and predictability.
- Give children choices, where there are choices. For example, you may not Be able to visit friends or go to the movies, but you can pick which game to play or program to watch.

- Help children keep in touch with friends and family members by phone, e-mail, FaceTime, Zoo, Skype, etc.
- Don't let children watch too much television with frightening images. The repetition of such scenes can be disturbing.
- Encourage children to choose something new to learn about. It could be a game, a craft or a challenging book
- Make sure kids stay physically active. If you're in a rural area, take a walk outside (observing social distancing guidelines). If you're in a more urban setting, help your child develop and Maintain a regular in-home exercise routine.
- Let kids participate in menu planning and meal preparation. Try and cook or bake something new.
- Be flexible...and patient. Sheltering. Sheltering in place may seem fun for the first few days, but the novelty quickly wears off. Your children may not always feel like talking or doing what you're doing.
- Be honest. Acknowledge that this is a difficult time for everyone. It's normal to feel tense and anxious under such trying and unusual circumstances.
- Give children space. Everyone needs some private "down time".
- Let little things go. Try not to overreact when things break, take too long or don't go quite as expected.
- Make future plans. Talk about and research things to do and places to go after the pandemic ends.

https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/latest_news/2020/Helping-Kids-Cope-While-Sheltering-in-Place.pdf





Creativity: A Substantial Key to Success

by Gena Clark, Teaching Liaison

“Creativity is the freest form of self-expression. There is nothing more satisfying and fulfilling for children than to be able to express themselves openly and without judgment. The ability to be creative, to create something from personal feelings and experiences, can reflect and nurture children's emotional health.”

The experiences children have during their first years of life can significantly enhance the development of their creativity and hence their ability to learn and use knowledge as an avenue to success.

When we consider essential skills that children need to succeed on their academic pathway, we mainly think of basic attains: speaking, reading, writing, counting and so on. Many parents believe that creativity is an intrinsic ability of certain people with unusual talents. In fact, this is not the case – creativity has nothing to do with artistic or musical talents. It is a way of thinking and expressing ourselves. It is about discovering and inventing new things, which motivates us to be imaginative and inventive.

Encouraging children to try out new things and ideas through play is a crucial factor in their intellectual, physical and emotional growth. Everything kids experience and explore about themselves influences their further development.

- Play helps develop each child's unique perspective and individual style of creative expression.
- Play expresses the child's personal, unique responses to the environment.
- Play is a self-expressive activity that draws on the child's powers of imagination.
- Play is open-ended, free-form and children have the freedom to try out new ideas as well as build on and experiment with the old.

What can you do to encourage and foster creativity in your child?

- Offer children a wide range of creative materials and experiences. Being creative is more than drawing or painting. There's also dramatic play (dress-up), photography, music, field trips, working with wire, clay, blocks, paper, wood, water or shadows.
- Provide ample time for children to think through and explore topics of choice and construct using materials.
- Allow children to wonder about everyday items, i.e. What can you do with a fork? For what can a brick be used? What could you or would you do if you could fly?
- Read age-appropriate books and ask about the motives of the characters

Providing opportunities to engage in creative endeavors supports children's social, intellectual, physical and emotional growth allowing for well-rounded development which is part and parcel to the health and success of any individual.



A Word from Our Director

Dear Preschool Families,

The Fall has brought crisp, cool days and our preschool children have really adjusted to schedules and learning in our virtual remote world! They are amazing and so are you, as parents or caretakers for assisting and supporting!!! Your role as a guide for the learning is so important to the success of our children and as we continue to work together, we'll see amazing growth and progress throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

During this current season we hope that you're finding small moments of joy and big parenting wins during this unusual time. While so many of our plans depend on the health guidance regarding social distancing, we hope that soon we'll be able to see children and families face to face and return to past experiences. We're just as eager as you to put the current pandemic and its impacts far behind us!

All of our children deserve quality early childhood education in a nurturing, engaging, healthy and safe environment with knowledgeable and caring teachers and staff to support them on their educational journey. While we move forward please be patient, as we continue being mindful of the safety precautions in our city, state and country during these unprecedented times.

Although I know this is not what our start of the preschool year usually looks like, know that we miss seeing our students in preschool. As a result of our endurance be assured that your child will continue to receive learning, supports and nurturing through our virtual educational experience until safety allows our setting to change in the near future. Take care and stay well!



Warmly,

Monica Carmichael, Director of Early Childhood

Community Parent Resources

Arm in Arm (Food, Housing and Support Services)	609-396-9355
Catholic Charities (Food, Clothing, Housing & Assistance Programs)	609-394- 8847
Home Front (Housing and Supportive Services for Families)	609-989-9417
Mercer County Board of Social Services	609-989-4320
Children System of Care (Services for Mental Health)	877-652-7624



