

Creating and Maintaining Safe Spaces in Weird Times

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NOTE TO PARENTS

Remember that this is a unique time in our lives. It is in these moments, it is important to create safe and peaceful spaces for when there are or will be big changes in the lives of our kids.

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Acknowledging the Change

It is very apparent that the lives and routines of our kids will be drastically different from what they were before the pandemic. It is important to address the change, the cause of the change, and the upcoming differences caused by the changes.

Acknowledging the Change

Addressing the Change:

- Talk to your children about the current change that has happened.
- Explain and provide examples of routine changes
 - **EXAMPLE:**
 - School at Home
 - Playing Only at Home
 - Wearing Masks

Understanding Emotions & Emotional Awareness

As parents, it is important to help children understand, build, and identify their emotions for healthy development. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

"Emotions impact our attention, memory, and learning; our ability to build relationships with others; and our physical and mental health (Salovey & Mayer 1990). Developing emotional intelligence enables us to manage emotions effectively and avoid being derailed, for example, by a flash of anger."

Imagine how beneficial this could be for children!

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Understanding Emotions & Emotional Awareness

Bringing Awareness to Our Emotions:

- Ask your child how they feel about the routine changes in their life.
 - Sad, Worried, Anxious, etc.
- Assure them by letting them know that all these emotions are normal and natural, especially in this time.

Understanding Emotions & Emotional Awareness

Bringing Awareness to Our Emotions:

- **Art Activity Suggestions:** Beside just having a conversation, doing an art activity is an easy way to talk to children about their emotions.
 - [Abstract Emotions Painting - Learning Emotions through Colors](#)
 - [Emotion Faces Drawing Printables Activity](#)
- **Sensory Activity Suggestions:** Another way to possibly talk and give a tactile example of emotions is doing these sensory activities.
 - [Empathy Bead Bracelets - Teaching Empathy and Other Emotions through Beading](#)
 - [Playdough Silly Portraits - Recognizing Emotions using Playdough](#)

Understanding Emotions & Emotional Awareness (contd)

Bringing Awareness to Our Emotions:

- **Book Suggestions:** For visual learners and bookworms, here is a list of helpful children's books on understanding and learning about emotions.
 - *The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas
 - *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain
 - *In My Heart* by Jo Witek
 - *Tough Guys (Have Feelings Too)* by Keith Negley
- **Writing Activity Suggestion:** For some people, writing their feelings can be a good release for understanding emotions.
 - [My Feelings Book Printable Image - Make a Book by Writing the Emotions that Match the Picture](#)

What is Coronavirus?



What Is Coronavirus?

What Is the Coronavirus?

- It is the current virus or pandemic that has been spreading around the world. It makes people feel sick and can be very bad.

Detecting Current Events

What Does Pandemic Mean?

- It is when a thing affects people, at the same time, and has a fast spreading outbreak affecting others around the world.



Accepting the Change

- It's important that as families to have healthy conversations about how the Coronavirus is changing daily routines, the new routines that are being developed, and talk about how they will continue to look in future.
- In doing this, the goal is to help children understand and accept the current situation, yet to teach them how to keep thriving despite the change.
- Explain what the virus is and how it spreads around to others.



Building Emotional Awareness

- Discuss with your children about the Coronavirus and its effects.
- Ask your children about how the Coronavirus and its effects may make them feel or make others feel.

Building Emotional Awareness

- **Social Story Suggestions:**
 - [Be A Coronavirus Fighter!](#)
 - [I Am Staying Healthy! Social Story](#)
 - [My Schedule Will Change Social Story](#)
- **Youtube Story Suggestions:**
 - [Wearing A Mask Story Youtube Video](#)
 - [Wash Your Hands & Why Do We Get Sick Story Youtube Video](#)

Recognizing the Changes:

Digging Deeper & Bringing Awareness to Life Changes

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Exploring the Change

- Revisit the changes and differences that are between now and before Coronavirus.
 - EXAMPLES
 - Going to school vs Logging in to Online Lessons
 - Playing at the Playground vs Playgrounds Not Being Available
 - Going to a Friend's House vs Face-timing, Video Chat with friends
 - Wearing Masks While Outside

Accepting the Change (Revisited)

- Again, take this time to conversate about the changes between routines before Coronavirus and the new routines that have been developed during this time.



Fostering Emotional Strength

- Reassure your child that emotions are the body's way of expressing discomfort in a situation or an environment.
- This is an important step in to cultivating healthy emotional development and awareness in children in order to create safe and peaceful spaces.

Fostering Emotional Strength

- **Sensory Activity Suggestions:** Another way to possibly talk and give a tactile example of emotions is doing these sensory activities.
 - [Pom Pom Balls: A Jar Full of Feelings](#)
 - [Slime: Inside Out Emotions Slime Activity](#)
- **Writing Activity Suggestions:** For some people, writing their feelings can be a good release for understanding emotions.
 - [Positive Thinking Cards Activity](#)

Finding Fun in the Changes: Exploring New Opportunities

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Next Steps: Be Proactive

- Time to be proactive!
- Let's examine some ways that to be proactive and use this time to adapt to the new changes, yet still have fun like before.
- For example, we'll take into consideration three important environments that have been impacted for children.
 - **Fun Places (Libraries, Beaches, Theme Parks, Indoor Playcenters, etc.)**
 - **Friends**
 - **Outdoor Leisure Activities**

Exploring the New Opportunities for Fun:

Fun Places: Libraries, Beaches, Theme Parks, Indoor Playcenters, etc

- Taking proactive steps and creating fun, there are several good alternatives to this during the Coronavirus quarantine with family.
 - **PlayCenters:** Design and setup an Obstacle Course!
 - **Theme Parks:** Watch and simulate a roller coaster!
 - Use laundry baskets or cardboard boxes to pretend and simulate a roller coaster!

Exploring the New Opportunities for Fun: (Contd)

Fun Places: Libraries, Beaches, Theme Parks, Indoor Playcenters, etc

- Taking proactive steps and creating fun, there are several good alternatives to this during the Coronavirus quarantine with family.
 - **Libraries:** Virtual Catalog and Virtual Programs!
 - Visit your local library's online book collection!
 - Get involved with the virtual classes for kids (if offered)
 - **Beaches:** This could easily turn into a Water Play Day!
 - Inflatable swimming pool
 - Water Tables
 - Water Balloon Games
 - Slip 'N Slide



Exploring the New Opportunities for Fun: Friends

- Without a doubt, children will miss their friends from their familiar environments. Here are some ways to be proactive and keep the fun with their friends!
 - Schedule a Virtual Chat Time using Zoom/Google Hangout
 - Plan and Coordinate:
 - Virtual Movie Night
 - Virtual Game Night
 - Do a Scavenger Hunt, then reconnect over a virtual hangout to review what each other found.
 - Be old-fashion and mail letters to friends.

Exploring the New Opportunities for Fun: Outdoor Leisure Activities

- Unlike the other considerations, this one is still possible to do outdoors. HOWEVER, it is still important to take precautions and be safe.
 - Go for a Bike Ride
 - Play and Practice a Sport
 - Have a Picnic (safely) at a Park or in your Backyard
 - Try Out an Online Dance Class
 - Ballet
 - Hip Hop
 - Or any other kids' virtual dance class
 - Have a DANCE PARTY!
 - Do an Online Workout at Home
 - Yoga
 - Zumba



Next Steps: Plan a Fun Day!

- Maintaining a stable and peaceful environment is important for healthy development in these times.
- With new knowledge of alternative activities, plan a Fun Day with your children.
- A Fun Day can consist of activities from all three categories or just one activity from one category.
- Do what feels right for your children!



Emotional Awareness in Practice

- After your Fun Day, ask your child how they felt about their Fun Day.
- Example Questions:
 - "Did you like our Fun Day?"
 - "What was your favorite part of Fun Day?"
 - "Next time, what should we add or change?"
 - "What did you not like?"

Maintaining the Fun

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NOTE TO PARENTS

Remember that it is important to create safe and peaceful spaces for when there are big changes in the lives of our kids. This next section is important for maintaining peace and positive growth for our children in unique times or situations.



Exploring Activities: Activities

- As we maintain these spaces and adjust our routines, it is important to continue doing these peaceful practices with our families.
- Some activity suggestions are:
 - Art Projects
 - Cooking/Baking
 - Make Sensory Table
 - Go on a Scavenger Hunt



Exploring Activities: Exercises

- As we maintain these spaces and adjust our routines, it is important to continue doing these peaceful practices with our families.
- Some exercise suggestions are:
 - Bike Riding
 - Yoga
 - Have a Dance Party
 - Play a Sport

Exploring Activities: Fun Days!


- As we maintain these spaces and adjust our routines, it is important to continue doing these peaceful practices with our families.
- Some Fun Day suggestions are:
 - Slip N' Slide Water Play
 - Play Dress Up and Put on a Show
 - Video Chat with Friends

Teaching Sustainability

- Another good way to create safe spaces is to practice sustainability.
 - ***Sustatinability***: the practice of using natural resources in a way that materials can last for a long time.
- Some suggestions for activities for sustainability are:
 - Recycling or Compsting
 - Walking Around and Cleaning the Neighborhood
 - Gardening
 - Build Objects from Plastic Recycables

The Power of Family

- As a child develops, it is the family who are the primary teachers that lay the foundations of learning and understanding.
- The importance of family time has a bearing on the social and emotional maturity of children and establishes deep understanding among family members.
- Spending quality time with children as the first step to raising happy children who will make a positive contribution to society.
- As a family, creating safe spaces and practice peaceful practices can guide and support your child through these unique times more smoothly. This can, also, allow for growth in development, their understanding of change, and how to adapt to change.



Thank You for
Watching and
Reading!

- **Remember to:**
 1. Allow for Change
 2. Acknowledge Emotions
 3. Accept the Change
 4. Be Proactive & Look for the Fun During the Change
 5. Maintain the Fun After the Change

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