



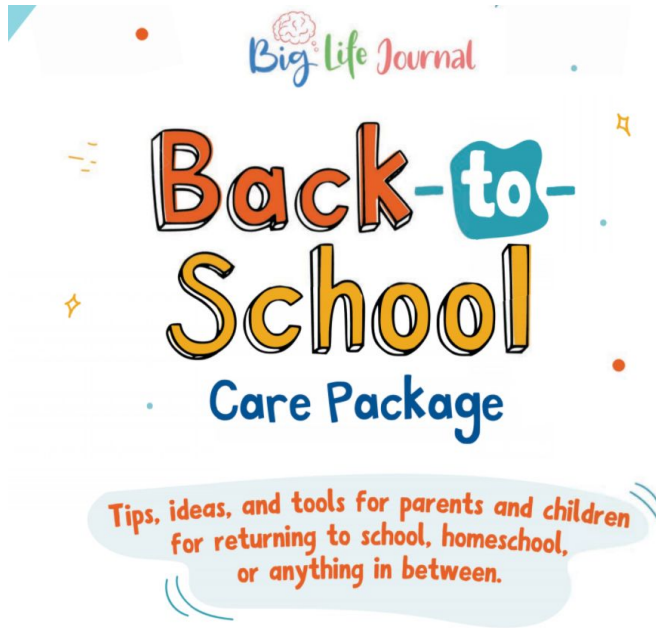
Stronger Together

Parkland School Division Family Supports Newsletter September 2, 2020

Dear parents and caregivers,

Welcome back!! You made it through the lockdown, the summer and you are now into the first week of school. Well done!! So many changes can be hard on your family. There are many uncertainties, but there are things we can do to help our kids to cope with change and to help them thrive when times are challenging.

Take care, Vicky Mamczasz -Family Support Facilitator, Dena Davis- Sunrise Supports Program Liaison



Check out this back to school care package - it is full of great ideas!!

[Big Life Journal](#)

[Change is Hard. An Unknown Future is Harder.](#) (from ADDitude Magazine)

Difficulty with transitions manifests in several ways, including resistance, avoidance, distraction, negotiations, or a full-blown meltdowns. If your child is demonstrating these behaviors, try these proven strategies to help them better navigate the change and uncertainty of today — and tomorrow.



1. Remind Your Child That Change is No One's Fault

Acknowledge that there will be a change and put it on a family calendar. Print a copy and tape it to the bathroom mirror so that schedule deviations aren't a surprise. Keep in mind that, though we know schedule changes right now aren't anyone's "fault," it is important to verbalize this as a means of reassurance for children. Being able to relate things to logic and science provide a grounding structure for understanding.

2. Teach Perspective Taking

Understanding how someone else sees the world allows us to work together and communicate. [Perspective taking](#) involves several distinct skills, including determining how someone else

feels, controlling inhibitions, and practicing cognitive flexibility. To help your child see the bigger picture, first make sure you provide pre-emptive validation regarding their personal worth. Then dedicate time, space, and support in reflective listening. Hear your child out, but be sure to emphasize that their life experience is much more than one event or achievement.

“Will this event matter in one week, one month, one year, or one decade?” If so, how? Practicing perspective taking in this way can help prevent a child from tying their personal worth to a single performance or social event.

3. Create Boundaries and Coping Strategies

The uncertainty of a less-than-stable routine can increase a student's anxiety and stress regarding school. Spending hours in front of a screen or a tablet isn't a great coping strategy, either, as excessive screen time can disrupt the production of melatonin, a sleep regulator. [Physical activity outdoors](#) in a natural setting can reduce stress and restore attention. Work with your child to define physical activities and coping strategies that they can use to stay focused and energized throughout the day.

4. Ask for Buy In

[Structure is great for soothing an anxious mind.](#) If plans are now uncertain, be honest about the reality of the situation and offer opportunity for feedback and buy in for meaningful alternatives. Asking open-ended questions and taking time for thoughtful pauses in the conversation empower children to be creative, reclaim some ownership, and feel a part of a shared integrative experience. It is OK to balance being supportive and being honest. It's OK to admit that you do not have all of the answers. Together, we can do this. With patience, structure, creativity, and good intentions, we can [support our children during these unusual times.](#)

Brian Lux, MAT is a licensed k-12 master educator

How do you set your kids up for success this year?

- **Get organized** - make sure you have a solid routine in place
 - make sure lunches and backpacks are organized the night before school and backpacks are always put back in the same place
 - Have your kids choose their school clothes the night before for the next day
- **Sleep is essential**
 - Make sure your kids have a reasonable bedtime (teens too)
 - Make it a standard practice that technology is shut down long before bedtime
 - Make sure teens have turned their phones OFF. Collect them if you need to, buy an old school alarm clock if an alarm becomes the excuse to keep their phone on
 - Have a bedtime routine in place - reading a story together, etc.
- **Family time is important**
 - Eat dinner together - talk about the day
 - Make the meal together - give everyone a job
 - Plan fun activities to do together
- Work with your kids to **set new goals** for the year (You can model how to do this by setting goals yourself.)
 - Help them to break down the steps to be able to accomplish them
 - Check in to see how things are progressing
 - Celebrate achievements
- **Set limits on technology**
 - Create a family plan and model the behaviour you want to achieve



Covid 19 - check in gently to see how your child is coping.....

It's important to be calm and proactive in your conversations with children – check in with them to see how they are doing. Their emotions will change regularly and you need to show them that's okay.

Whether at school or at home, caregivers can engage children in creative activities, such as playing and drawing, to help them express and communicate any negative feelings they may be experiencing in a safe and supportive environment. This helps children find positive ways to express difficult feelings such as anger, fear or sadness.

As children often take their emotional cues from the key adults in their lives – including parents and teachers – it is important that adults manage their own emotions well and remain calm, listen to children's concerns, speak kindly and reassure them.

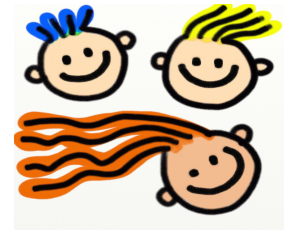
Watch for the warning signs of unhealthy tech usage.

The psychologist Jon Lasser, who co-wrote "Tech Generation: Raising Balanced Kids in a Hyper-Connected World," says parents should note when:

- Kids complain that they're bored or unhappy when they don't have access to technology
- Tantrums or harsh resistance occur when you set screen time limits
- Screen time interferes with sleep, school and face-to-face communication

Resilience - how do we bounce back - teaching your kids to thrive (adapted from American Psychological Association - Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers.)

We all can develop resilience, and we can help our children develop it as well. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned over time. The following are tips to build resilience. (<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience>)



1. **Make connections**

Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Build a strong family network to support your child through his or her inevitable disappointments and hurts. Connecting with people provides social support and strengthens resilience.

2. **Help your child by having him or her help others**

Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer work.

3. **Maintain a daily routine**

Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Encourage your child to develop his or her own routines.

4. **Take a break**

While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. Teach your child how to focus on something besides what's worrying him. Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling, whether it be news, the Internet or overheard conversations, and make sure your child takes a break from those things if they trouble her.

5. **Teach your child self-care**

Make yourself a good example, and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise and rest. Make sure your child has time to have fun, and make sure that your child hasn't scheduled every moment of his or her life with no "down time" to relax. Caring for oneself and even having fun will help your child stay balanced and better deal with stressful times.

6. **Move toward your goals**

Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step

at a time. Moving toward that goal — even if it's a tiny step — and receiving praise for doing so will focus your child on what he or she has accomplished rather than on what hasn't been accomplished, and can help build the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges.

7. **Nurture a positive self-view**

Help your child remember ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past and then help him understand that these past challenges help him build the strength to handle future challenges. Help your child learn to trust himself to solve problems and make appropriate decisions. Teach your child to see the humor in life, and the ability to laugh at one's self.

8. **Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook**

Even when your child is facing very painful events, help him look at the situation in a broader context and keep a

long-term perspective. Although your child may be too young to consider a long-term look on his own, help him or her see that there is a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be good. An optimistic and positive outlook enables your child to see the good things in life and keep going even in the hardest times.

9. **Look for opportunities for self-discovery**

Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever he is facing can teach him "what he is made of."

10. **Accept that change is part of living**

Change often can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable.

Strong Families Series: Transitioning Back to School



August 26, 2020 - Parkland School Division is proud to present another FREE information session for local families.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020-2021 school year will be unlike any other in living memory. Regardless of whether students return to in-person classes or continue their learning at home, adjusting to this kind of change can be a struggle that produces feelings of anxiety in everyone involved - parents and families included. (Continued below)

In our upcoming Strong Families session, psychologist Joel Pukalo will offer families practical tips for navigating these uncharted waters - approaching the new school year with a positive attitude, addressing mental health concerns and enhancing social connections to maintain a steady course forward.

Dates: Tuesday, September 8, 2020

Time: 6:30pm

Location: [Online Zoom Webinar / Discussion Group](#)

Presenter: Joel Pukalo (Family Life Psychology)

In this session, we will discuss:

- Universal parenting practices to support mental health and enhance social connectedness
- Practical back-to-school tips on scheduling, routines, and creating positive expectations for the new school year
- Proven strategies to support children and parents struggling with anxiety and adjusting to the “new normal” of school in the fall

The session will also include some Q&A time for parents/guardians to ask questions regarding specific challenges their children may be experiencing.

Please register early to reserve your spot by visiting

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/psds-strong-families-series-transitioning-back-to-school-registration-118188429775>.

For more information, please contact:

Vicky Mamczasz

Family Supports Facilitator

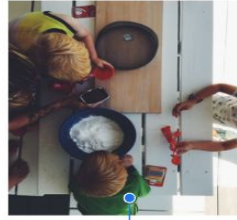
Email: vmamczasz@psd70.ab.ca

Family Activity

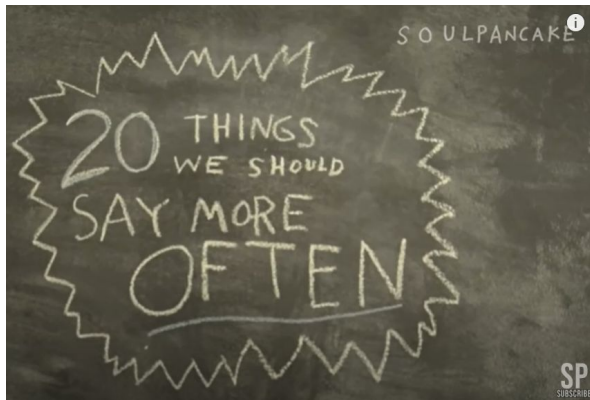
Try a new thing

1. Each family member picks one new thing to try for the month.
2. Each family member agrees to stick with it
3. Share and celebrate successes and failures

This is a great way for you to model resilience for your kids. You can talk about what went well, how things were frustrating sometimes and the value of finishing things and how you felt.



Kid President's 20 Things We Should Say More Often



Reach out for support in your community...

Youth Mental Health (Westview Primary Care Network) - call in for an appointment - 780-960 - 9533 ext 221
Community Connector - Michelle Enright - 780-217-4146
Youth Mental Health - Northgate Walk In Clinic (AHS - now call in or virtual appointment) 780-342-2700
MOBILE/AFTERHOURS CRISIS TEAM: 780-407-1000
Mobile Addictions Support - Lisa Kimmerly - 780-868-1895
Parenting support (APFA) - Triple P Parenting - Rebecca Plante - 780-963-0549
Adult Crisis Response - 780-342-7777
Support Network Distress Line - 780-482-4357
Adult Mental Health Referral and Treatment - 780-342-7700
Parkland School Division - Family Support - Vicky Mamczasz - vmamczasz@psd70.ab.ca
Sunrise Supports - Dena Davis - dgdavis@psd70.ab.ca