

March 25, 2020

To our Saint James Families,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well and healthy.

This is an unsettling time for all of us. With so many life changes and future unknowns, we work to manage and cope with numerous emotions. As our teachers continue to support learning needs, and keep students academically engaged, we would like to additionally provide tools to help you and your children address these varied emotions.

Below are some suggestions, followed by further age appropriate resources...

Validate – We all want to feel heard and understood. Maybe your child is a chatterbox, who shares every thought and emotion, or maybe he/she needs prompting to talk about what they're thinking and feeling. Either way, verbally acknowledging that thoughts and feelings are both real and important, can go a long way.

Example: Child: "It is so annoying not being able to go anywhere and see my friends."

Parent: "It's not helpful to complain and isn't a big deal – you'll see your friends soon enough."

Instead try responding: "I get that – I'm having a hard time not seeing my friends too. I know FaceTime isn't the same, but I've found that helpful. Have you?"

Reassure – While there are so many things we don't have control over right now, there are many things we do. Reminding ourselves and our children of that can be reassuring. What is your family doing to stay safe and healthy? Talk about that daily, and ask kids for their input and ideas.

Routine – Many kids may not admit it, but we all thrive with structure in our lives. It helps us feel safe, and improves productivity. Creating a routine will likely look different for every family, although distance learning gives us an excellent base for working around the school day...even if it is virtual. Talk as a family about what a successful family routine will look like. Maybe there will be some trial and error, and that's okay - you'll eventually develop a routine that works for you.

Silver Linings – It's so easy to focus on all the disruptions, and negative things, the Coronavirus has introduced into our lives. While it may be tricky at first, think of some positives...no matter how small. Less hectic days? More family time? More time for a hobby? Perhaps create a list, and add to it daily. You may be surprised with all the positives you come up with!

Use the below links for further resources on talking to kids about the Coronavirus –

Talking to Teens:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-talk-to-teens-about-the-new-coronavirus-2020031419192>

Talking to children grades 3-5:

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Talking to children grades K-2:

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/lifestyle/parenting/keep-calm-and-carry-on-helping-children-deal-with-stress-about-coronavirus/ar-BB11jWJ7>

If you have questions, or would like to discuss options for additional support, please reach out to me – Cate Jennings, Saint James School Social Worker – cjennings@saintjameschool.net .

Sincerely,

Cate Jennings, LMSW

Saint James School Social Worker