



Behavioral Support Weekly Digest

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Let's Work Together



How To Talk to Your Child about COVID-19.

1.Keep it Simple

- A lengthy explanation is not necessary! Explain there is a new sickness that was unknown until December 2019 and it is making some people sick. Because the sickness can spread easily we are taking precautions to stay healthy. A social story can help with keeping it simple, and we've linked a great one at the end!

2. Explain The Direct Effects/ Facts

- Connect facts to their experience- explain school closures, limitations on seeing friends and families in person, as well as the changes in routine as a result of the sickness. Explain these changes are happening because we want to stay healthy and we want others to stay healthy.

3. Explain the Changes/ Alternatives

- Explain how the changes will be handled. You can let your child know they will learn and see their teachers, but it will not be in person. Let them know that they can still talk to

family on the phone, FaceTime and Skype. Children can write letters and draw pictures to send to important people. Affirm their feelings around these changes - "Yes, not being able to see Mommom and Poppop makes me feel sad too" or " I really miss my friends too" or " I really like being home with you too!". Connecting in this way will help the child to co-regulate with you and manage their anxiety.

4. Explain what THEY have Control Over

- Right now, life can feel very out of control. Let your child know how he/she/they can have some control over the spread of the virus. They can wash their hands, not touch their faces and practice social distancing. Letting your child know they can actively participate in keeping themselves and their family safe gives them the opportunity to feel positively about the current situation.

5. Model the Control

- Model what we want our kids to practice! 20 second hand washing can become a family affair (who can make up the silliest song, sing as a pirate or sound like mom or dad). Waving at neighbors, and practicing social distancing will assure your child that it is easy to practice protective actions. You can let your child know verbally why we engage in this as well. For example: "Right now I want to say hi to our neighbors, I can do that by waving 6ft away and saying hello! Look at Mr. Burke's- he has a smile on his face! You helped him to feel so happy, I hope you feel happy too"! For older kids you might say "hey, thanks for making Mr. Burke's feel important! I appreciate you!".

6. Check in Emotionally, Answer Questions and Address Concerns

- Acknowledging and discussing any questions and/or concerns your child has is critical. Anxious thoughts and feelings can lead to feelings of fear. A check in for an elementary aged child might look like this:

Child: "Dad, when are we going back to school?" (*Information seeking question and concern*)

Dad: "I don't know buddy, we haven't been given a day yet, we have to wait and see" (*Information giving answer*)

Child: "I like staying home but I miss my teacher and friends" (*Emotional statement*)

Dad: "I bet you miss your friends and teacher! I wonder what you miss about them the most?" (*affirmation and curiosity of the child's experience*)

- For middle and high school students, be aware they are likely experiencing a myriad of thoughts and emotions. Being curious and affirming with their thoughts and feelings may help them to put some words around what they are experiencing. Understanding and empathy are key. Be mindful of any behaviors that seem out of the ordinary. It could simply be the way a child is processing their experiences or it could be something more. As always, do not hesitate to ask for help. See below for behavioral influences and how they may affect their learning.

For a Social Story on COVID-19 please go [here](#).

For an emotional check in sheet example please go [here](#).

* Some additional resources regarding COVID-19 & children can be found on the [BSD website!](#)



Creating a Learning Environment at Home

Children may become easily distracted when it comes to working within the home environment. It is important to be mindful of the amount of colors, directives, displays, activities, noises, smells, and or materials that are within the environment in which they are intending to work. Some simple tips can assist with creating a calm and predictable learning environment.

1. **Simplify the space.** Provide a specific table of which will be utilized as a working space. If you have a desk, that's great. If not, a table or even a specific seat and a clipboard will do. This will be known as the "working space."
2. **Designate a specific area** for quiet work such as reading. Some kids enjoy reading in an area away from their work space, and that is okay. Just be mindful of the stimulation within that environment as well!
3. **Try to eliminate excess materials** not needed for work from the designated area. The needed materials for assignments are typically a pencil and paper, a schedule/list, a timer, and/or technological device. Toys should not be present within the working environment.
4. **Try to eliminate excess noise.** Some kids can work with quiet music playing in the background, while some work best with complete silence. The noise in the working environment should not become a distraction.
5. **Provide a timeframe** for the amount of time work will be presented for the current work session. Some kids may benefit from a visual schedule placed within the working environment, or a "to do," check list.
6. **Build Independence.** Teach your child how to set up their own working environment! They can assist with wiping down the table, removing excess items, and dictating what items may be necessary for learning. The more involvement, the more independence!



Behavior Influences on Learning

Behavior is anything that a person does. We are aware that our environment affects our behavior, but it's important to think about how every detail of our environment can affect how we act, and some environmental factors can become barriers to learning. If your child has autism, they may notice details in their environment that you haven't even thought of. It's important to consider the [sensory needs](#) of your child before they are able to focus on learning. Consider the factors below before setting up your student's learning environment at home. Read more about behavioral influences on learning [here](#).

External Influences on Behavior:

- Family/Household Transitions and Changes
- Unreasonable Expectations
- Minor Illness/Discomfort
- Death of a Family Member
- Loss of a Pet
- A New Family Member
- Divorce and/or Remarriage of a Parent
- Abuse
- Chronic or Serious Illness
- Heavy Academic Demands
- Inappropriate Educational Placement

Internal Influences on Behavior:

- Unreasonable Expectations
- Cognitive Functioning
- Developmental Profile
- Communication Difficulties
- Individual's Temperament
- Emotional Problems
- Learning Difficulties

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Life Skills

While your kids are home, it's the perfect opportunity to teach them life skills, such as basic household chores or daily living skills. We often teach life skills through task analyses, which involves breaking down the skill into several steps, and teaching each step individually. We have provided two task analyses below for washing hands and making the bed.

Washing Your Hands	Making the Bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Walk to the sink 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Go to bedroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turn on warm water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take the fitted sheet, top sheet, blankets, and pillows off the bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get soap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pick up the fitted sheet and wrap it around each corner of the bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pump soap or rub soap on hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pick up the top sheet and place it on the bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scrub hands for 20 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Match each corner of the top sheet with a corner of the bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rinse hands until soap is gone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pick up blankets and place them on the bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get a towel/paper towel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Match each corner of blankets with corner of the bed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dry hands with towel and throw away/put back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place pillows at the top of the bed



Weekly Tips

1. **Do not make false promises:** Make sure whatever reinforcers promised to your kiddo are earned and delivered. Promise simple things that can be delivered like time together, taking a walk, sharing a snack. - Lauryn Elder M.Ed., BCBA
2. **Have a designated space for “school:”** Choose an area that your child can complete their learning in, free from as many distractions as possible. This is a big change for everyone and consistency will help! - Alexis Foulk, M.S., BCBA
3. **Praise often:** Try to recognize every time your child is behaving appropriately and reward them with praise for it! Even if it's as simple as sitting in their seat with a calm body, make sure to provide specific positive praise such as “Great job sitting nicely!” - Alexandria Larson M.S., BCBA
4. **Find moments of delight with your child:** When you find ways to delight in your child, you create an experience for them that connects you relationally. Staying in the moment is good for you and your child! Jennifer Stein, LPCMH



Just For Fun

Virtual Tours: Click on the links below to go on a virtual adventure! Check back each week for different locations!

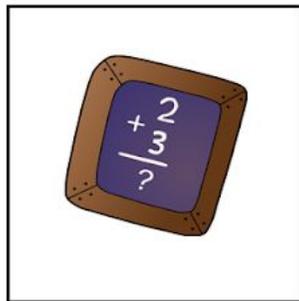
[1. National Aquarium](#) -- Check out Baltimore's National Aquarium! You can choose to explore different exhibits, such as dolphins, lurking, jellies or the Amazon River! In each scene, you can click on an animal and learn fun facts about them.

[2. Ancient Egypt](#) -- Look at different hieroglyphs, Egyptian numbers, and pyramid temples! You can explore pyramids in 3D, practice typing on a hieroglyphic typewriter and learn about different Egyptian inventions.

Keeping Kids Engaged at Home: [8 Indoor Activities to Release Kids Energy](#)

Social Skills: Socially, we are often following directions, whether it's a direction from our boss, our coach, our teammates, or our friends. Learning how to follow directions is an important skill to learn in any social situation. Here are a few tips on how to give directions.

- Give your child clear and concise instructions when asking them to complete a task.
- Do not ask in the form of a question (ex.; "Are you ready to do your math worksheet?")
 - Instead, it could be phrased as "Two more minutes, then we're going to do math!"
- It may also be beneficial to phrase instructions in a "first, then" format.
 - For example, "First math work, then iPad." This may help to motivate your child to complete a task they don't enjoy as much!



FIRST



THEN

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