



# *Mental Wellness*

TIPS FOR FAMILIES DURING COVID 19

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EDUCATIONAL SERVICE UNIT 5

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*Photo: I Love Public Schools*

*Jen McHally*

is a director of mental health & wellness, psychotherapist and national speaker who has been providing mental health services, psychoeducation, and administration for more than 18 years to children and families in a variety of settings, including: residential treatment facilities, outpatient treatment, and schools. Jen previously served on Nebraska's Children's Commission (LB821) and was appointed as Nebraska's Psychotropic Medication Committee's chairperson. She currently works as a director of mental health & wellness for the Educational Service Unit 5 (ESU5), which supports 10 school districts in Nebraska, employing trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) and CBT, among other modalities. Jen presents across the country on trauma-informed care, mental health, self-care strategies, and empowerment for public and private institutions.



*Jamie Mapps*

is a school psychologist/mental health professional who has been providing mental and behavioral health services for over 10 years to children and families in the educational setting. Jamie is the current Nebraska School Psychologists Association President. In that role she is able to partner with the Nebraska legislature and other state organizations to support safe school environments and best practices that allow youth to thrive at school, home, and in life. Jamie also serves on the Nebraska Foster Care Review Board. She currently works as a mental health professional for the Educational Service Unit 5 (ESU5), serving Beatrice Public Schools and Freeman Public Schools, employing trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) and CBT, among other modalities. Jamie presents to districts on mental wellness in the classroom, and strategies that promote engagement for kids.

# Staying connected Outside your home while social distancing



- Reach out and call family and friends
- Spend time outside each day, weather permitting.
- Email and/or video message family members and friends back and forth routinely
- Snail mail pen pals with handwritten notes
- Hang out with friends and family virtually [Eat dinner together, games, charades or book club. Have fun with being creative!]
- Social distancing is not social disengaging! Brainstorm ways to be part of the collective to help your community [random acts of kindness]
- Find virtual classes to stream [cooking, knitting, drawing]

# Staying connected Inside your home while social distancing



- Family meetings to discuss schedule for the day, appreciations, and any concerns from family members.
- Establish routines and expectations as a family team together. Provide reassurance, and practice regulation.
  - Come up with a team name!
- Dance, laugh and play!
- Find something interesting to learn about as a family
- Be sure to mix in meaningful screen time
- Documenting day to day during this unprecedented time [polaroids, photos, videos, journaling, etc.]
- Check in with each other's feelings throughout the day

# Emotional Self Regulation for Kids



- Listen with intention and be available.
- Teach them how to deal with stress and big feelings:
  - Name feeling and try a strategy
    - Relaxation
      - Breathing: shape breathing, belly breathing, etc.
      - Mindfulness, meditation, & guided muscle relaxation
    - Match heart rate [emotional and physical]
      - Get moving [Just Dance, GoNoodle, jump, others]
    - Help them use positive self-talk
    - Channel emotions into creating and/or connection
      - Journal, draw, color, any art or music
    - Distraction
      - Change of scenery [one room to other, inside to outside, around others or by yourself]
      - Change of task [book, puzzle, play, fidgets]
- Reassure them that it's okay to not be okay sometimes, and you're all in this together as a family.

# Self Care for Kids



- Intentional journaling
  - Today was great because...
  - I really had fun doing....
  - I feel thankful for....
- Develop daily schedules, so your kid(s) know what to expect
- Puzzles, board games, cards
- Building forts & make believe, obstacle courses, scavenger hunts
- Have them share three things they're proud of they did that day
- Spend time outside each day, weather permitting
- Access online virtual experiences
- Online yoga and gym classes
- Daily positive self affirmations
- Monitor screen time each day, and access to news outlets
- Keep connected with friends, classmates, and family

# Self Care for YOU

"Taking care of yourself is part of taking care of your kids"

- Make a list of things you accomplished each day
- Find opportunities in your day to recharge emotionally and physically
- Reach out to friends and family members to stay connected
- Try and reduce social media to 30-60 minutes a day
- Wake up 5-10 minutes earlier to focus on the following mental wellness exercises:
  - Connect with breath, set intention for the new day through silence, stretching exercises, write down a goal(s) you have for the day [does not require that you meet each one]. Goal is to start forward focused/growth mindset
- Give yourself a re-do if you feel like you made a mistake during the day. We give re-dos to our kid(s), you deserve that too!

# Resources

**"LET US PUT OUR  
MINDS TOGETHER  
AND SEE WHAT  
LIFE WE CAN  
MAKE FOR OUR  
CHILDREN"**

*Sitting Bull*

- Virtual field trips
  - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16eVfdxrwetJOay-Kezayf6m7M-rukOitD-JfxVfxMhk/edit?usp=sharing>
- Family meeting agenda, check list, positive self-affirmations, wellness check-ins, etc...
  - [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14enDVDG7iXmPuRhxmEsDxFWvBoeR4l\\_y?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14enDVDG7iXmPuRhxmEsDxFWvBoeR4l_y?usp=sharing)
- Meditation/mindfulness for kids
  - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PBwcCZo9jUujpjAQHzSLUDFgZMMEVfd7e5eBG9Uj1QM/edit?usp=sharing>