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BUILDING RESILIENT FAMILIES

AUGUST 2020

Mitigating COVID-19 Trauma

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

As the Stay at Home order continues, schools not re-opening, and parents and kids working and learning from home, the 'beginning of the school year' looks very different than we are used to. On top of an already stressful fall, we are navigating divisive politics and civil unrest in our communities in response to systematic racism.

The one comfort I find is that we are all in this together. We can lean on each other to get through this difficult time stronger than before. Even though each of us has a unique set of circumstances, which plays into how the pandemic affects us, we can all benefit from implementing a few

practices to support our families and our future. Remember, when parents are struggling, the family is struggling. Try the suggestions on the following page to help mitigate the trauma we are facing. Links to quick reads follow each suggestion.



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- **Breathe** ~ as our anxiety rises, our breath gets shallow, which increases our heart rate, which increases anxiety. Breathe. (<https://www.renataururahy.com/healing-tools>)
- **Create a weekday routine** ~ for you and your family. Although we do not have to be as rigid with the schedule as if we were all leaving the house, having a routine helps reduce anxiety and stress on the family. When we know what to expect, we feel less anxious about the day. (<https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/health-benefits-of-having-a-routine>) Children thrive with routine because it helps them feel in control of their day. (<https://www.naturalbeachliving.com/daily-routine-for-children/>)
- **Schedule breaks, frequently** ~ research shows that we are more productive when we take intentional breaks. Children and adults need breaks. A rule of thumb for children's attention span for non-preferred activities is one minute per year of age. Consider scheduling in breaks throughout the day. (<https://www.wired.com/story/productivity-tips-coronavirus-work-from-home/>)
 - Let children create a 'break basket'. They can put things into a bin/basket that they can do during their breaks. Set a timer so they know when their break is up.
- **Put away screens (ALL SCREENS) during meal time** ~ meal time should be for re-engaging in the family. When phones, tv, video games, etc. are in the hands of family members, that person is engaging with technology – not socially with humans. (<https://www.plano.co/cutting-screen-time-from-family-meal-times/>)
- **Talk** ~ to each other, to professionals, to colleagues, to your children. The more we can talk about the stressors we are facing, the better we can put things into perspective. When we keep things bottled up, the issues can seem bigger and more intense than the really are. (<https://adrenalfatiguesolution.com/talking-about-your-stress/>)
- **Do something that makes you happy, every day** ~ Each family member should identify things that make them happy that they can do at home. These activities trigger brain chemicals that increase happiness:
 - Endorphins (through movement)
 - Serotonin (through exposure to light, movement and positive thoughts)
 - Dopamine (through hitting a target, accomplishing a task)
 - Oxytocin (through physical touch and relationships).(<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-23924/the-brain-chemicals-that-make-you-happy-and-how-to-trigger-them.html>)
- **Give yourself a break** ~ this too, shall pass; until it does, we have to give ourselves and our family a little grace. (<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/40-ways-to-give-yourself-a-break/>)
- **Use the term 'physical distancing' instead of 'social distancing'** ~ humans are social beings and just a simple change in language can support our efforts to maintain social connections through physical distance. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wired-love/202004/social-vs-physical-distancing-why-it-matters>)