



Working with University College London

Keeping in touch during the Covid 19 pandemic

Issue 3, May 4th 2020

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News

Welcome back to the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities newsletter: a collaboration by staff at the Race Equality Foundation and University College London (UCL) to help you and your family during the Coronavirus outbreak. This newsletter is here to offer some practical tips and support for you, parents and practitioners alike, direct from the SFSC team, and keep you informed of the latest advice to follow. We hope you find this helpful and you can let us know what you think and what you want more of by getting in touch (see the bottom of this newsletter for contact details). Take care and stay safe!



Together Study Event

If you are an SFSC delivery agency or area and are interested in hearing about how the research is progressing, or how you can become a site for the

research, why not sign up to our Webinar and hear all about it?

The webinar is taking place on 22nd May at midday. To book a place click [here](#).

SFSC Can help



Modelling in lockdown

With families spending so much time at home without the usual routines of school and work, the word 'discipline' has become a very one important for us all. When parents discipline children, they may often be 'reacting' in the moment to a particular behaviour

with the belief that children need a 'negative' consequence or punishment to control/change that behaviour.

The SFSC parenting programme provides a process of positive and corrective

discipline which is intended to teach rather than control children. This empowers parents to 'respond' to a child's behaviour rather than 'react' and helps children choose to do the 'right thing'. Positive discipline works by increasing children's respectful behaviours, leaving less room for negative ones. Children who behave well, feel good about themselves and when we feel good about ourselves, we behave more positively. This positive cycle works for all members of the family, increasing self esteem: our ability to cope with whatever life throws at us- more important now than ever.

The most powerful discipline tool parents have is: themselves. From birth, children learn by watching what their parents do. This is called 'modeling'. From how to speak and walk as toddlers to core values like fairness, respect, honesty, responsibility and accountability; children learn by watching their parents. The SFSC parenting programme puts modeling as its number 1 step in the 'process of discipline'. The impact of modeling is so important that it is considered repeatedly throughout the curriculum and parents are encouraged from the outset to understand its power by looking at their children to see how their behaviour is mirrored. This self reflection by parents asks them first to consider, 'Is my child's negative behaviour resulting from him copying my behaviour?' This is not about parents blaming themselves (as children grow, they are not the only influencers in their lives), but parental modeling can teach or remind children how to do things in the 'right' way.

Parents who are mindful of what they are modeling can offer subtle teaching to their children on all behaviours. This really is about 'actions being louder than words'.

Parents might want to model clearer 'schedules' at home of learning/working, playing, exercising, relaxing, praying, chores, family time. This is a time when parents really can lead by example. Modeling can bring about positive changes without punishment, lecturing and stress and calmer, happier parents will model calmer, happier children.



Supporting Teenagers

With current lockdown measures still firmly in place supporting older children can be difficult. You're up against social-media, Netflix and Whatsapp, nevermind the absence of them being able to see their friends. For those teenagers that may have just started to date or to have a part time job, these rites of passage have been dramatically taken away while families are on lockdown. During lockdown, teenagers may swing from boredom and frustration to nervous and angry, and a load of other emotions on the way. And because of their teen brains feel invincible in the face of the virus, making it harder to enforce distancing. with potential challenges for parents.

So what can we do during such a time to steer our teenagers away from too much digital display and ensure they follow social distancing guidelines?

: Older children are far more exposed to the ever growing information on Covid-19, with social media spreading news by the minute. It is important to be open, have discussions and address any questions or concerns they may have. With social distancing being the rule, the absence of socialising will undoubtedly be a challenge for older children. Validate their feelings and acknowledge that you know how frustrating it must be. To compensate for the absence of face to face social networks, perhaps try to be a little more relaxed on the time they're spending socialising with friends online.

: The current situation causes worry for many, so it is important to ensure your teenager's mental health is looked after. Encourage conversation around concerns and direct older children to the many organisations providing great tips and resources. Take a look at [this](#).

: Older children are used to the

responsibility of routine at school/college, so try to support them in doing the same at home. Give them the responsibility of planning their day ensuring they're getting a good balance between work, "socialising" and exercising. Encourage a good night's sleep, rest and healthy habits.

: Whether you are working or not, now is the best time to enhance your relationship with your child(ren). Try the SFSC model of [Special Time](#) that was featured in issue 1 of this newsletter.

: For children addicted to their screens BT have created "[Code a Cake](#)" which uses baking as an analogy for coding, providing online experience for the wannabe gamers out there. It is aimed at 6-11 year olds but provides great introduction and insight into the world of coding, so older children may find it interesting too

For the avid gamers, if feasible, invest in a new game that requires movement e.g. dance or sport games; this way you're not restricting the game console, rather, you're encouraging exercising / burning energy - win:win.

: Now is the perfect time for our children to be creative. Got spare paint in the cupboard? Maybe let them redecorate their room or move their furniture around - this will allow them to create a personal safe space when they want to be alone. Encourage aspirations by allowing older children to research, plan and be creative. Sit down with your child and encourage them to develop goals for their future.

: We are all in this together, so remember that there is no right or wrong way during this difficult time. Whilst older children may have a better understanding of the current pandemic than younger ones, it is still important not to forget they are experiencing big changes and are having to adjust to new circumstances. Be patient and understand that emotions might get frayed.

Tips from the SFSC Community

This is a new section and we encourage SFSC parents and facilitators to share their tips for surviving lockdown and social distancing. Our first contributor is Nishie Willmott, SFSC parent who is one of the PPI members for the Together Study.



Managing home schooling

- Get the school work out of the way in the morning then you have the afternoon to catch up on your work while the children are doing creative activities such as yoga, board games, or construction.

- Encourage the children to do fun educational activity online, try educational games such as <https://trockstars.com/>
- Remember exercise and after lunch break - go for cycling or an hour long walk.

Money savings

- Have a menu worked out for the week for lunch and dinner so you don't buy unnecessary groceries and it goes to waste. This stops overbuying and saves money.

How to keep kids busy

- Get children involved and shared house chores and responsibilities like cooking a meal together, and don't forget to have fun!

Helpful Resources

We will be sharing a few useful resources to help us get through this time of self isolation. If there are areas that would like information on, please feel free to drop us a line and we will see what is out there. Our focus in going to be on resources we can access online or via the phone as we cannot get out to get the help we might need right now. Remember that many of the telephone helplines like Samaritans and Childline are taking calls and can also be a source of someone to talk to.



The teen brain

We had a request for more information relating to teenagers and have responded to this with the article in this edition above. However, this [blog](#) by Dr John Coleman is also really useful in helping us think about the teen brain.

Maintaining contact with grandparents

For many children, not being able to spend time with their grandparents during lockdown is difficult. A change in their normal routine and a lack of contact with their grandparents can cause anxiety, stress and confusion. And not having the support of other family members to help with bringing up children can be difficult for parents too. Useful suggestions for keeping

in touch can be found [here](#).



Think about what you share online....

When shared, false information can take on a life of its own and have some serious consequences. It can lead to health scares, false accusations and potentially damaging hoax stories. Recently there has been a lot of this kind of false information about coronavirus. It's not always easy to spot, so use the [SHARE checklist](#) to make sure that you don't feed the beast.

Covid 19 Advice

Mental wellbeing during Covid 19

Your own and your families mental wellbeing will likely be under significant stress at the moment as everyone adjusts to living with social distancing and isolation restrictions. We are suddenly living in a world, very different to the one we knew only a few months ago, and it can be hard to know how to support yourself and those you care for when everything around you is changing.

ANXIETY

Recognising and understanding the impact of coronavirus and social distancing on our own and other people's mental health is an extremely important part of this adjustment process and UCL are currently conducting a social study to explore and understand people's psychological and social experiences of living in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study will help to understand the psychological and social challenges we face, the effects of any potentially protective activities we could be engaging in and also help to inform and improve the management of future public health crisis. To find out more information about this study and how you could take part [click here](#).

With all of these significant changes and mounting pressures on our routines, jobs, health and caring

responsibilities, it is easy to be left feeling out of control of what is happening around us. Change can feel threatening but it doesn't have to be frightening and learning how to reframe how we think about change and the challenges we face can help us to take back control and flip negative feelings on their head so we can view change through a more positive lense.



Spending time at home can be a great opportunity to start looking after ourselves and those around us and take the time to enjoy and appreciate the small and simple things in life. In a world of change let's start to take back control by taking time to relax and find calm in a frantic world.



Here are some practical and easy tips to help you and your family build relaxation into your daily routine which will help to improve everyone's wellbeing. They do not require a lot of time and remember you are never too young or too old to start looking after yourself so get family members of all ages involved:

Breathing: Mindful breathing is a quick and easy way of reducing feelings of anxiety and calming thoughts of panic if you are feeling overwhelmed.

[Click here for exercise in mindful breathing](#)

Relaxation: Relaxation can take as little as 5 minutes a day and can help you let go of physical and emotional stress.

[Click here for an exercise in relaxation](#)

Relaxing safe place imagery: Learn to transport yourself to a place where you feel calm, peaceful and safe.

[Click here for an exercise in imagery](#)

Mindfulness: Mindfulness can help you focus on the simple pleasures in life and enjoying what you already have around you.

[Click here for an exercise in mindfulness](#)

Meditation for young children: Headspace has partnered with Sesame Street to encourage children to practice meditation and mindfulness as a way to combat stress and anxiety during these challenging times. These short practices will be launched twice a week on [YouTube](#) and [YouTube Kids](#).

[Click here for the first video](#)

TikTok and Mental Health Support for older children: Psychologist Dr Julie Smith is offering advice through this social media app, sharing guidance that can help young people and teenagers practice self-care take control of their own wellbeing.

[Click here for more information](#)

What is SFSC

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities is an inclusive evidence-based parenting programme, designed to promote protective factors which are associated with good parenting and better outcomes for children. SFSC is a group based programme for parents of children from birth to 18.

Further information is available [here](#).

What is 'Together'

We are a team of academics, practitioners, policy-makers and parents who are focused on understanding the impact of Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities. In particular, we want to know how this programme might improve the mental wellbeing of parents and their children.

Further information is available [here](#).

Get in touch

We hope this information is useful and helps in this difficult time. Do let us know if you want us to cover other topics in this newsletter by emailing us at donna@racefound.org.uk, Tweeting [@racefound](#) [@TogetherStudy1](#) [#TogetherSFSC](#).

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Company limited by guarantee England
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