



Working with University College London
Keeping in touch during the Covid 19 pandemic

Issue 7, June 30th 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.

Staff changes for the Together Study

We would like to welcome Dr Annemarie Lodder to UCL and the research team for the Together Study. She has previously worked on a parenting intervention for parents of autistic children and also has lots of experience around online parenting support so will be a wonderful asset for SFSC and for the research study. If you are involved in the Together project you will be contacted by Annemarie directly (if you have not been already) who I know is looking forward to getting to know you all.

We also say a sad farewell to Dr Anita Mehay who worked tirelessly to establish the Together Study who has moved onto pastures new but continues to be part of the management team for this project and will no doubt offer much needed support.

SFSC online options

Remember that social distancing does not mean that you cannot offer SFSC opportunities to parents.

There is both a small group four session introduction that SFSC facilitators can provide via an online platform and a six week course offered directly to parents from the SFSC team involving individual session and facilitated group discussions. Contact leandra@racefound.org.uk for further information.



SFSC Can help



As humans, we are capable of incredible acts of love, generosity, and kindness but we also have capacity for unspeakable violence, ferocity, and destruction, but why is this? Human nature includes core characteristics *feelings, psychology and behaviour*, however the family and culture we are born into also shape and pass on its ideas about being human.

Session two of the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities curriculum presents the Nature of Humans as an important concept in developing ourselves and our children. The Nature of Humans represents one of the three foundational circles which underpin the programme and its impact on parenting should not be underestimated.

The Nature of Human's schematic describes human beings as four dimensional; physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual, and that when we develop, take care of, and utilise all four dimensions in unison we become more rounded, flexible and willing to learn new ways to live in an ever-changing world. This allows us to

embrace different cultures and value systems with greater compassion. Greater understanding of ourselves and others promotes harmony within, plus values and behaviours in keeping with a violence free healthy lifestyle.

Important to the process is supporting parents to consider practical ways of developing balance across the four dimensions so children can transition holistically from early to late childhood, and young people from late childhood into adulthood.

- Physical considers our growth, size, movement, aesthetics etc. To develop healthy bodies, we need to eat a balanced diet, take regular exercise, get enough sleep, and learn to manage stress.
- Emotional considers how something, someone or situations makes you feel, and covers feelings both positive and painful. Our emotional lives are based on our relationships and to be effective we should spend time with others, spend time alone and manage/communicate feelings experienced.
- Mental considers cognitive functioning, acquisition of knowledge, creative skills, solution building skills, common sense etc. (not mental health and well-being which overlaps all four dimensions). We should feed our minds with stimulating ideas, balance time spent learning, analysing, being artistic, and learn to think both logically and creatively.
- Spiritual is based on our values/purpose and considers whatever generates a positive feeling of contentment and peace within. To flourish here, we need to develop love for self, others and for some families, a higher being; take time out to perhaps meditate, pray, find solace in nature, and adopt activities which promote a sense of security within.

Notably, at various stages of the cycle of life we are inclined in one dimension versus another; Broadly speaking, early childhood is very physical: rapid growth, movement. In late childhood we see greater emphasis on emotions and outcomes based on feelings/hormone driven. In the adult part of the life cycle mental/cognitive reasoning is driven by responsibility for others and finally in elderhood we tend to see more spiritual focus and thoughts of afterlife.

We also recognise that some have a greater emphasis in one or two dimensions based on their value system, traditions, and customs. Some families/cultures in parts of the world are all about 'the stuff' i.e. the physical dimension- how much can I acquire and what does it look like, and names/brands may be important. What something or someone looks like may well be important, however, if we compound this with the emotional tendency of young people, we can see the challenge this might present.

Similarly, we can identify families/cultures who prioritise the spiritual dimension and as such may demonstrate greater faith in positive outcomes in the absence of physical evidence including medical advice.

The nature of humans is saying we achieve better functioning for ourselves and others when we develop/balance across the four areas:

Example. If you were buying a car, what might influence your decision?

The physical aspects of the car - colour, shape, the look of the interior etc. An emotional pull - you might have a particular penchant for a style of car based on nostalgia, or perhaps it's the same car someone you care about has or had. Mental reasoning - you might consider the cost of buying and running the car, insurance, safety or reliability etc. And not least Spiritual sway - which might include an internal assurance that the car you've selected is the right one, a gut feeling, the belief or sense of knowing this is the one.

A decision based on just one dimension may have limitations, but two or more considerations make for better outcomes. In developing children holistically parents need to compensate for children and young people with a predilection to the physical and emotional dimensions and adjust for their own cultural bias.

"when we grow, our children grow: when they grow we also grow"

Young Persons' Advisory Group



Opportunities for young people to be involved in research!

We're excited to be setting up a young persons' advisory group in the next couple of months!

This will be for young people aged 14 - 18 years old whose parents have completed the SFSC parenting programme. We want to bring together a group of young people to develop and share research plans on two SFSC projects. The first is a PhD project, looking at young people's experiences of parenting. This aims to co-develop a tool for measuring young people's experiences and outcomes of SFSC, from their perspective. This project is led by PhD researcher Christie Garner, at the University of Sheffield. The second project we'll be talking to the young people about is the 'Together Study' at UCL. They're interested in sharing the latest research findings with the young people, and offering sessions on 'how to do research' and 'becoming a researcher'.

In the advisory group we'll be asking the young people's opinions on the Together Study research findings; designing the PhD research workshops; and how to engage other young people to take part in research. The young people will be involved in 4 - 5 online advisory group meetings, over consecutive weeks. The meetings will be co-facilitated by Christie Garner (PhD researcher) and Nicola Westbrook, a researcher on the Together Study. Nicki and Christie both have experiences outside of research working with young people and families, and are passionate about setting-up this advisory group.

This is a chance for young people to have their voices heard, to learn new skills and meet new people from across the UK. All whilst (hopefully!) having fun and doing something different during lockdown. We're currently finalising our plans and getting approval from the universities research ethics committees.

If you think your young person would like to take part, then please let us know, we'll add your name to a list. Once all our plans are approved and we have the green light, we'll follow-up with more information and how to sign-up. For more information contact [Nicola](#).

Tips from the SFSC Community

In this section we encourage SFSC parents and facilitators to share their tips for surviving lockdown and social distancing. This week we hear from Manal Abdelhamid from Hull, one of the parents from our TOGETHER Study parent advisory group that meet in locations in the North of the country.

Please send in your tips to be shared here!



- Help children have a good understanding of Covid 19, lockdown and why we must stay at home. I use videos to share how the outside looks if the virus is visible. We listen to the news, so the family understand why staying at home and obeying the rules is important.
- At the same time they know we are not on holiday so we have to cover school work to avoid falling behind. While doing the school work, I take photos and record videos of study at home, trying to make it fun and then I share with the school. The children feel happy and confident when they read their teacher's nice comments.
- Allow the children to suggest what to eat and get them all in the kitchen to help. For example, We baked cakes, made them different shapes and decorated them and finished by cleaning up. This time in the kitchen cooking and talking to each other was really good, the children learnt something new and they were away from there ipads for a while!

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.

Information for pregnant women and new parents

NHS England have produced some new [leaflets](#) aimed at pregnant women and new mums to take account of the impact of Covid 19. These cover, planning the birth, staying healthy during pregnancy, information on newborns and illnesses in newborns. There is also a series of translated versions you can download [here](#).



Healthy Start Vouchers

If you are pregnant or have a child under four you could qualify for free vouchers every week to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and infant formula milk. You can also get free vitamins. Find out if you qualify [here](#).

Tips for parents in a difficult living situation

Life under lockdown can be especially tough if your living situation poses further challenges. Take a look at this [blog](#) by helpline experts from Young Minds who share their tips for dealing with a lack of physical space, parental separation, arguments, aggressive or violent behaviour and domestic abuse.



Can you help: surveying young people

The coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak, has impacted on many people's lives. Leeds University has developed a short survey which aims to explore the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on children and young people who have used or would like to use a weight management service including your thoughts and actions towards the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and whether the outbreak has impacted access to weight management services. Your information will improve our understanding weight management support needed for children and young people both during and after the pandemic.

Request to young people and their parents:

Dr Stuart Flint, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Leeds would like to contact young people to take part in a survey. This survey can be completed by either a person aged 16 or 17 years who is overweight or very overweight including those attending a weight management service or a parent or carer of a child or young person aged 4-15 years who are overweight or very overweight including those attending a weight management service. There are no right or wrong answers, and all responses will remain anonymous. The study will take 18 minutes to complete.

This project has been approved by the School of Psychology at the University of Leeds – Reference Number PSYC-61.

Below is the link to the survey, where you will be able to read an information sheet and decide whether you wish to participate in the survey.

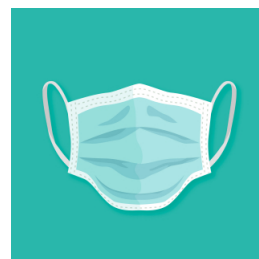
[Find out more and access the survey.](#)

Covid 19 Advice

Changes to guidance on Shielding

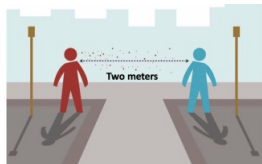
Since lockdown began many people have been [shielding](#) due to underlying health conditions that make them high risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19. This has meant the tough reality of not being able to leave the house and maintaining social distancing measures even with family members with whom you live. Finally we are starting to see the gradual easing of these restrictions with them being paused altogether from the 1st August. So what does this mean and what will this look like?

From 6 July, those shielding will now be allowed to meet in groups of up to 6 people outside, including those from different households, whilst maintaining strict social distancing. People shielding will also no longer need to observe social distancing with other members of their household and will also be able to form a [support bubble](#), if they are living in a single adult household. From the 1st August shielding guidance will be lifted altogether in England and Northern Ireland meaning people who are currently shielding will no longer be required to being advised to adopt strict [social distancing measures](#) in place of shielding.



Other changes from 1st August for people shielding include:

- Going to work if you are unable to work from home, if your workplace is [COVID-safe](#) and you are able to social distance at work.
- Food and medicine boxes will also stop but priority delivery slots from supermarkets and valuable support from services such as [NHS volunteer responders](#) will remain in place to support those in need.



For many the easing of shielding will be a welcome step towards returning to a more normal routine with the prospect of spending time outdoors will offer independence, fresh air, exercise and the opportunity to access social support all of which

helps to elevate mood and reduce the loneliness and anxiety that can come with shielding. However for many this change may also come with feelings of fear and anxiety.

It will have been easy to build up barriers to the outside including a lack of motivation to do the simple activities you used to take for granted. For those with underlying health conditions it remains important to be vigilant in terms of taking precautionary measures/checking for physical symptoms but this can easily become an excessive habit leading to further anxiety and a reluctance to go outside.



So how do you go about overcoming some of these fears? It is important to keep following advice and safety precautions and remember that shielding is a personal decision. Be kind to yourself and let yourself become used to the new experience of being outside again. Depending on your level of anxiety this

may be about introducing new routines in a gradual and manageable way for example only going out on your own to begin with or going outside at times when there are fewer people about like early in the morning. Remember the decision to go out is yours but there is support available to help you make the decisions that are right for you. You can find out more information about ways to increase your motivation and protect yourself when out and about by [clicking here](#). For more specialist advice on looking after your mental health as we come out of lockdown [click here](#)

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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