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## The Family Room Presents: Social Emotional Learning

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### Questions Answered This Month:

- What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?
- How can I support SEL at home?
- How can I help my children stay motivated and engaged during distance learning?
- How to address anxiety and fears related to COVID-19, distance learning, and returning to school
- How can I help my family balance school life and home life?
- How can I help my children manage difficult emotions such as anxiety, depression, frustration and disappointment?
- Where can I find more resources?

## Social Emotional Learning

Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)

CASEL SEL 101 for Parents <https://casel.org/homes-and-communities/>

Arizona Department of Education - SEL

<https://www.azed.gov/improvement/social-emotional-learning/>

## Supporting SEL at Home

Some of the basic environmental factors that support social emotional health and learning that we have focused on in our Amphi schools this first month, are the same ones that can be strengthened and focused on at home.

These include establishing routines and procedures, setting clear and consistent expectations and focusing on building strong relationships and communication. During times of turmoil or high stress, it is often important to go back to some of these foundational components. These are ones which create a sense of safety, security and lay the foundation for self-regulation (the ability to manage our emotions).

Help your child build positive coping strategies to deal with difficult emotions. Model. Share with them your own strategies.

Each of the SEL programs utilized in Amphitheater also have a home component which can be accessed through their respective websites.

<https://www.sanfordharmony.org/>

<https://www.secondstep.org/>

<https://chooselovemovement.org/>

<https://www.kimochis.com/>

## **Helping Children Stay Motivated and Engaged**

Set short and long- term goals. These can be individual or group/ family goals. Identify how you will ‘celebrate’ along the way. Celebrate both benchmarks along the way and reaching the final goal!

Make it fun. Create friendly competitions, turn skill building into games, or pair work practice with activity. For example, practice spelling words while jumping rope or paint a map of the U.S. instead of writing names and capitals. Similar to setting goals, this can help motivate.

Schedule regular breaks throughout the day.

Get up and move around between activities.

Use a variety of reinforcements. This can be anything from tangible rewards to verbal praise, extra attention, etc. “A behavior noticed, is a behavior worth repeating”.

Remember to reward effort rather than outcome. Recognizing accomplishments is great, but outcomes do not always reflect effort. Especially at this time when the ‘usual’ outcomes may not be achievable, recognize your child’s effort.

Chunk assignments or activities into smaller, more manageable tasks.

Look up some positive affirmations or work with your child to write some of your own. Repeating positive affirmations can actually change our mindset over time.

<https://www.thepathway2success.com/101-positive-affirmations-for-kids/>

Speak to your child's school about systems for behavior and/or reinforcement that are used in school and may be available during distance learning. Many schools have continued their PBIS programs during distance learning. Using consistent language and having consistent expectations can help reduce anxiety, create security, help maintain positive behavior, and help keep students motivated.

Help your student practice intentional self-care. Feeling unmotivated and 'burnt out' tells us we need to increase our intentional self-care practices.

## **Helping Children Manage Anxiety Related to Distance Learning and Returning to School**

Listen without judgement and validate your child's feelings.

Limit access to news and social media. Being overloaded with information (especially conflicting information) can be anxiety producing.

If your child is experiencing serious anxiety during remote learning related to having their camera on, contact your child's teacher to discuss possible accommodations (e.g. checking in with camera on then communicating via chat or through mic).

Give your child age appropriate information about what to expect upon return. Stick to the facts about what you know. If you don't know, tell them that you do not know but that you will figure it out together. Make sure children know you are with them.

Give reassurance where appropriate. Let your child know that the adults have gone through great lengths in making plans to ensure everyone's safety and that there are plans in place to do so.

Help children identify what they can control such as wearing masks and washing hands.

Make sure you are not expressing your own anxieties to (or around) your child verbally or non-verbally. Children will take their emotional cues from the trusted adults in their lives.

Reassure your child that you will be there for them and make sure your child knows specifically how to ask you for help.

Check in periodically with your child to see how they are feeling, to answer their questions, and support them in problem solving when necessary.

Find out who the support staff is/are at your child's school so that you can speak to them about your child's anxiety and so that your child knows where they can seek additional support

For more information and resources about to help your child with COVID-19 related anxiety, visit:

[CDC Talking to Children about Coronavirus](#)

[Child Mind Institute](#)

## **Balancing Home Life and School Work**

Set up a consistent routine and schedule. Indicate clear times for breaks and clearly distinguish between school time and outside of school time. Many students do best with a visual schedule.

Set up a designated work area, or create a “classroom kit” full of supplies and materials to be taken out and used for school. Have students go to and utilize this work space only for school. Encourage children not to work in bed. This helps create a sense of separation, and establishes a tangible boundary, which helps create balance.

It is ok to let students problem solve, ask questions of peers and struggle on their own as part of the learning process.

Encourage non digital/non electronic activities for school breaks and outside of school time.

If students are on screens outside of school time, encourage them to be interacting with others rather than engaging in activities alone.

Set clear boundaries for screen time including tech-free times and zones such as during meals, one hour before bed, at the dinner table, and charging phones outside of the bedroom. Model tech-free times and tech-free zones.

Remember outdoor activity! Physical activity and sunlight exposure are both important factors in maintaining good physical, emotional, and mental health.

If your child is feeling overwhelmed by their work load, communicate your concerns with their teacher or empower them to do so to see if adjustments can be made or to request additional support. Encourage your child to express their concerns to their teachers as well. Self-advocacy is an important SEL skill.

Model good balance and boundaries for your child. When is your non-negotiable down time? Children pay attention far more to what adults Do than what they SAY.

Make self-care an intentional part of your home and family routine. Have your child (and other family members) make a list of the things they need to stay healthy physically, mentally, spiritually or emotionally. Then make time each week to make sure that you are attending to those needs.

Once the school day is done, put away school supplies, books, and devices.

## **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**

Arizona has more than 198,000 “kinship care” households headed by grandparents or other relatives who are caring for one or more related children, according to Arizona Kinship Support Services. This period

of remote learning has been especially difficult for these Grandparents, who are already filling the dual role of parent and grandparent, and have now added 'teacher' to that list.

## [Arizona Kinship](#)

### **Helping Manage Difficult Emotions / Mental Health**

In general, when helping children with difficult emotions, the goal is not to avoid or remove all stressful/anxiety/ hard emotion provoking situations but to help them learn to manage these feelings

Listen without judgement and validate feelings.

Answer questions with age appropriate information

Teach and practice assertive communication. When children learn how to speak up for themselves, this builds self-esteem and resilience.

When ready, help children identify what they can control. For example, perhaps they can choose hobbies, friends, social engagements, school electives, chores, etc.

Always take good care of basic needs: sleep, nutrition, physical activity.

Teach, practice and model healthy coping skills. If children don't know which skills are most effective for them, try some new ones together such as: Talking with others, journaling, engaging in enjoyable activities, practicing daily gratitude / keep a gratitude journal.

Help children step outside of themselves and focus on others: volunteering, starting or joining a service projects, practicing acts of kindness.

Help children by not dwelling on their anxiety or frustration but check-in and be available.

24 hour Mental Health Crisis Hotline- 622- 6000

<https://kidshealth.org/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness - NAMI Southern AZ - <https://www.namisa.org/>