



NEWSLETTER

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May is Mental Health Month

Each year during the month of May, we draw attention to the importance of positive mental health during national Mental Health Month. This year, as we enter the third month of social distancing, we pause to consider the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children, youth and families, and to offer tips for well-being.

How can we use these days at home to improve our mental health? What can we do with our children and family to support a positive mindset? How do we support our family's mental health ups and downs during this time?

Read on to learn tidbits from the BSF team about the importance of mental health, how to respond to our kids in healthy ways, and some ideas and inspirations to promote positive thinking and physical wellness.



WISDOM

The Empathetic Response

"That's so sad..."
"What a bummer..."
"Oh. Man..."

Using empathy when children make mistakes allows us to remain the "good guy" while allowing the child's bad decision to be the "bad guy". The child's frontal lobe (problem solving) of the brain is used instead of the brain stem (survival response).

Children who are allowed to make mistakes and then are given consequences with empathy are more likely to learn from their mistakes and have ownership of their actions.

The Gift of Time

By Caroline Mullins | NRVCS Behavioral Health Wellness Specialist



Last month we addressed the importance of family meetings. It is crucial to keep up with those. In my household those "meetings" have become easier as we are finding ourselves sitting around the dinner table most evenings! Since our routines have dramatically changed and slowed down, the conversation topics are not as "busy."

Our topics have shifted from school, sports, and other activities to finding ourselves talking more about...wait for it...FEELINGS! That's right, because we have virtually no distractions, we are talking about what might be more important than grades or their game scores. Our kids have opened up about missing school (GASP), their friends and activities. We have become more reflective on the things we truly enjoy, what our goals are, and how we are feeling about the current crisis we all find ourselves in. And, as parents (because we have the time) we have become more responsive to their needs and less reactive to their behavior. Don't get me wrong, it isn't all rainbows and unicorns. We have the same struggles over schoolwork and housework. We all struggle with motivation, but we now have the time to recover from our mistakes. We have fewer distractions to fog up our perspective. It's all in how you look at things.

Keeping a positive perspective is what your mental health is relying on to get you through this. Viewing this lock-down as a gift of time and finding the good will help more than you might recognize. Positive thinking decreases depression, increases lifespan, improves cardiovascular health, and even improves your immune system!

Take the time you've been given to realize what is most important to you and your family. Take the time you've been given to respond to your kids' feelings and emotions using empathy and love. This will allow them to feel safe and secure when the outside world seems chaotic. Seek positivity and surround yourself with positive people (virtually). Read books with positive plots, follow blogs with positive posts, and watch movies and TV shows that are uplifting. Perhaps, when this is all over, you will have gained a renewed spirit and perspective of time.

Be sure to keep a routine while staying at home

We no longer have schools and activities to rely on for a daily or weekly routine. This adds more strain on parents as we know routines are extremely important to our mental health.

On the next page you will find some helpful resources to use if you haven't yet found a routine that works for your family. For more information, check out <https://www.superhealthykids.com/parenting/at-home-flexible-daily-schedule-for-kids/>

BSF Feedback

"...I just wanted to thank you for the newsletter in the mail. Now my son can do some activities and I have ideas to do with him for cooking. Plus, the reminder of empathy was definitely good because I find my son having a lot of negative self-talk and I notice myself trying to fix things. I'm definitely going to be more intentional about using empathetic responses. Thank you and I look forward to more!"

-BSF Participant, Fall 2019

Do you have feedback or parenting questions? Email Leslie at lbeasley@nrvc.org or Caroline at cmullins@nrvc.org.

Words of Wisdom:

Ending the school year on a good note

Mental Health Month takes on a new meaning this year as we continue the fight against COVID-19.

Families are experiencing stressful situations that come with the disruption of normal family routines and schedules, especially the cancellation of school.

Routine creates safety and security for children and the closing of schools has resulted in a number of losses, including the loss of a normal routine and socially connecting with their friends.

In the world of a child, being a student is their "job" 180 days of the year. With their regular routine upended, a child's "job" and sense of purpose isn't as clear these days.

To help children and youth through this time, adults need to redefine and communicate effectively that the child's purpose, in regard to learning, has not changed. How and where the learning is accomplished

A final departure for "Cat"

It is with mixed emotions that I share Cathy 'Cat' Songer's retirement from New River Valley Community Services.

Cat has been an invaluable asset to our parenting programs as a parent facilitator for the last four years. In addition to her work with the parenting programs, she has been lead facilitator for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, 9th grade Too Good for Drugs facilitator at Pulaski County High School, and a Parent Coach.

Parenting is Cat's passion and the role as teacher and mentor to the parents she worked with has been amazing to witness. She knew that families, at times, needed help and she was there to support them. She taught without judgement, listened without bias, and relayed course material in her no nonsense way. She believed 'good parenting' started with the love and trust you have for your children.

One of her favorite quotes from Maya Angelou is, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

Cat is looking forward to working in her garden, hiking and being home with her family. On a personal note, she is a



dear friend and will be greatly missed by her BSF Program teammates.

So, to quote a Rodgers and Hammerstein song from one of my favorite movies, *The Sound of Music*:

"So long, farewell, auf wiedersehn, goodbye, I leave and heave a sigh and say goodbye."

From all of us, goodbye, Cat, and thank you for sharing your gifts. Take care and enjoy your retirement!

- Leslie

may look different, but their "job" is the same.

Below are a few tips for parents and caregivers to consider as you help your child adjust.

- Establish (or maintain) a routine to provide structure to weekdays.

- Emphasize the importance of continuing school work by providing specific structure for student learning, including set times and space for school work.

- Set expectations (goals) for accomplishing assignments. Be sure to include the child's ideas (when reasonable), each day.

- Maintain connection with school staff by phone, text, or the internet. Ask questions of teachers! They are the experts and want their students to be successful!

- Connect with other parents and students -- we're all in this together and peer support is important.

- Celebrate success when assignments are successfully completed!

- If your child is struggling with anxiety, respond with empathy.

While these practical tips can help, the most important thing you can do to help children cope with stress is to model the response you want your child to have. Children and youth are extremely adept at picking up on adult emotions, and anxiety can be very contagious.

That doesn't mean you can't feel stressed, vulnerable, or even panicked! Just be aware that how parents react is how children and youth learn to react.

Share your feelings with your family in age-appropriate ways, use empathy to encourage your children to talk about their feelings, identify the potential positives that can result, and model how you want your child to respond to adversity.

KIDS DAILY HOME ROUTINE



MORNING
7:00 – 10:00 AM

GET DRESSED
BRUSH TEETH
MAKE BED

EAT BREAKFAST
KITCHEN CLEANUP
GET ACTIVE



LEARNING
10:00–12:00 PM

MATH
SPELLING
READING

PHONICS
GEOGRAPHY
FLASH CARDS

SCIENCE
ONLINE LEARNING
WRITING



CREATING
1:00 – 3:00 PM

SENSORY PLAY
PAINTING
DRAWING

PLAYDOUGH
MUSIC PRACTICE
EXPERIMENTS

CRAFTS
SEWING
LEGOS



EVENING
4:00 – BEDTIME

FAMILY DINNER
HOUSE CLEANUP
BATH/SHOWER

PAJAMAS
FAMILY GAME
READING

LUNCH BREAK



Kids At Home SCHEDULE IDEAS

Self Care

Shower/Bathe
Get Dressed
Brush Teeth
Floss
Clip Fingernails
Brush Hair

Academic Learning

Flash Cards
Online School Work
Workbooks
Practice Writing
Phonics
Practice Spelling
Geography

Household Contribution

Laundry
Clean Bathroom
Yardwork/Gardening
Cook a Simple Meal
Sort Mail
Wipe Down Surfaces
Take out Garbages
Organize a Closet

Creative Learning

Science Experiment
Nature Walk
Learn How Things Work
Hands On Learning
Sensory Play
Virtual Fieldtrip
Set up learning 'centers'

Free Play

Ride Bikes
Sidewalk chalk
Legos
Build a block city
Playdough Creations
Build and color a box fort
Collect stones to paint
Balloon Games

Personal Development

Music Practice
Sports Practice
Drawing/Painting
Dance
Sewing
Service
Photography

In the Kitchen

Leslie's Comfort Food Corner: Ramen Coleslaw

Did you know that cabbage is a powerful brain food? It contains Vitamin K, which boosts mental function and concentration. Cabbage is also high in B Vitamins which are known as energy boosting vitamins. So, next time you have an afternoon slump, reach for this tasty snack! Also makes for a wonderful spring/summer side dish!

Ingredients:

1 head of cabbage
5-6 scallion onions
Ramen Noodles, chicken flavor
½ cup sunflower seeds
½ cup slivered almonds
½ cup oil
2 T sugar
4 T vinegar
¼ teaspoon pepper

Slice cabbage in thin strips. Chop up onions. Toss together. In separate bowl, combine ½ cup oil, 2T sugar, 2T vinegar, seasoning packet from Chicken Ramen Noodles and pepper. Break apart the Ramen noodles and crunch into small pieces. Combine noodles, sunflower seeds, and almonds. Before serving, add dressing (oil, sugar, vinegar and seasoning pack); toss salad. Add toppings - Ramen noodles, sunflower seeds, almonds and toss. Serve immediately.

(Note: If you want to make ahead, wait to add the toppings until just before serving.)



Image: Mockup Graphics - Unsplash

Dee's Delicious Dish: Turkey Sausage with Zoodles

Ingredients:

2 zucchini and 2 yellow squash – spiral cut into “noodles”
1 small glass jar of sun dried tomatoes in extra virgin olive oil
1 can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
1 package of Italian turkey sausage (preferably organic and nitrate-free) casings removed and cut into small pieces
2 cups spinach
2 TBSP of extra virgin olive oil
¼ tsp crushed red peppers (optional)
Small pinch of sea salt and pepper

Insert the zucchini and yellow squash into a spirilizer or spiral slicer to create zucchini noodles/zoodles.

In a large pan heat the extra virgin olive oil over medium heat. Add the chicken/turkey to pan and sauté for about 6-8 minutes, or until sausage is cooked well.

Pour the zucchini/yellow squash noodles, sun dried tomatoes and liquid, cannellini beans,

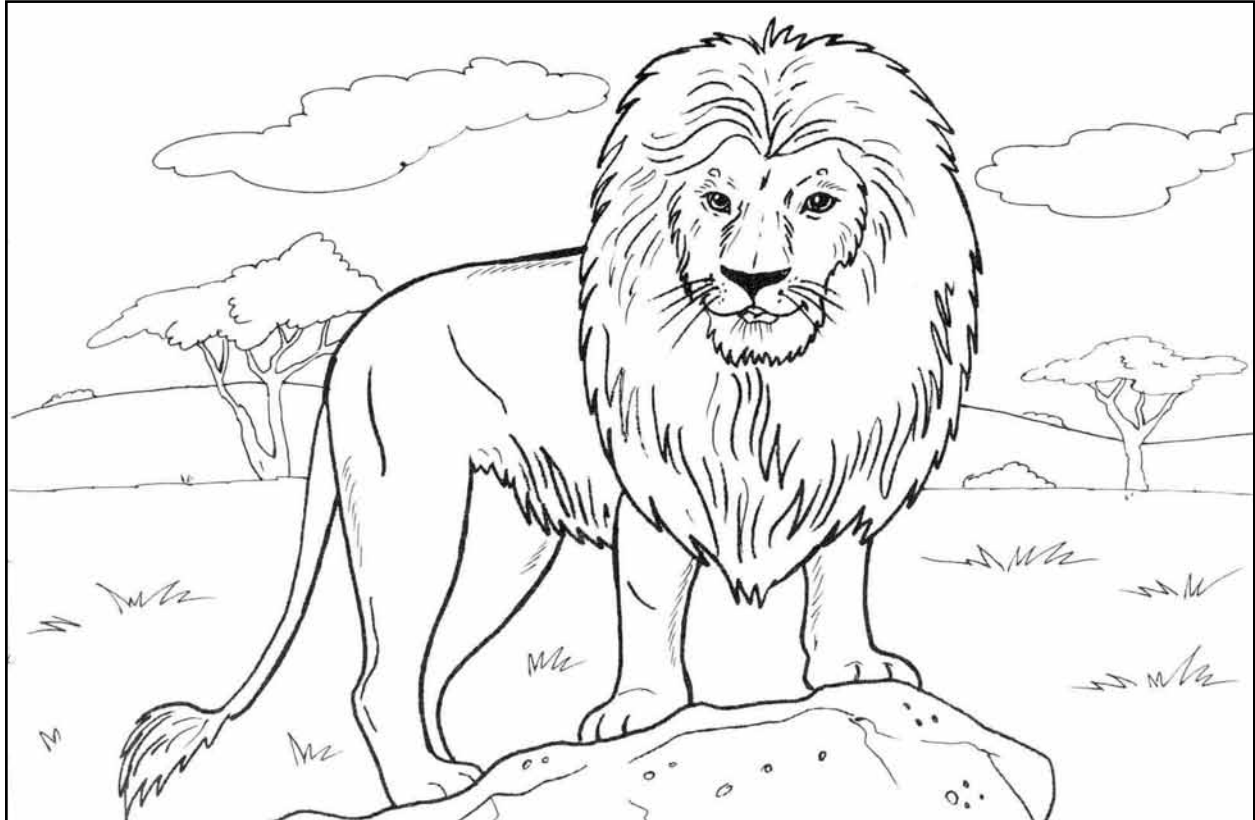


Image - health.clevelandclinic.org

spinach, salt and pepper into the pan. Sauté for an additional 5 minutes. Mix ingredients together and portion into meals for the rest of the week.

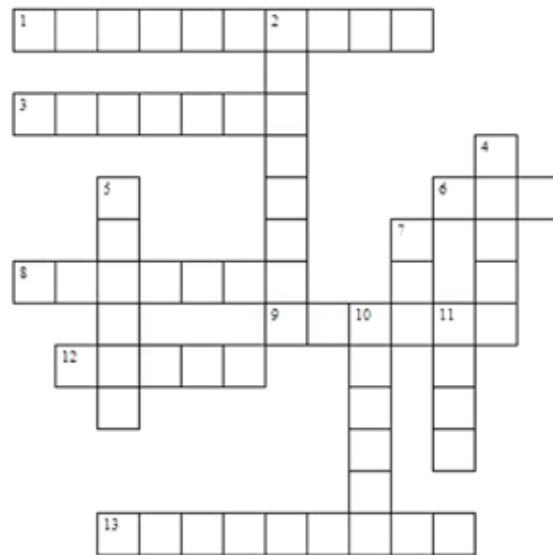
Recipe adapted from Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials and Wellness Team

Jenelle's Twisters & Tricksters



From: bestcoloringpagesforkids.com

Animals Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 1 Big animal that has one horn
- 3 This animal has a very long neck
- 6 Man's best friend
- 8 Lives in the cold and waddles
- 9 Slow moving and has a shell
- 12 Striped animal that looks like a horse
- 13 Can swim under water and walk on land and has a big bite

DOWN

- 2 This animal has a long trunk
- 4 This animal likes to eat carrots and sugar cubes
- 5 This animal loves bananas
- 7 Some say this animal has nine lives
- 10 Has big ears and likes to hop
- 11 King of the jungle

From allkidsnetwork.com

MAKE-IT-FUN *with Caroline*



Learn to Draw: A Hug

With all of this social distancing, we can't hug the people that matter the most to us who don't live in the same household.

Learn to draw this HUG and then mail it to someone special!

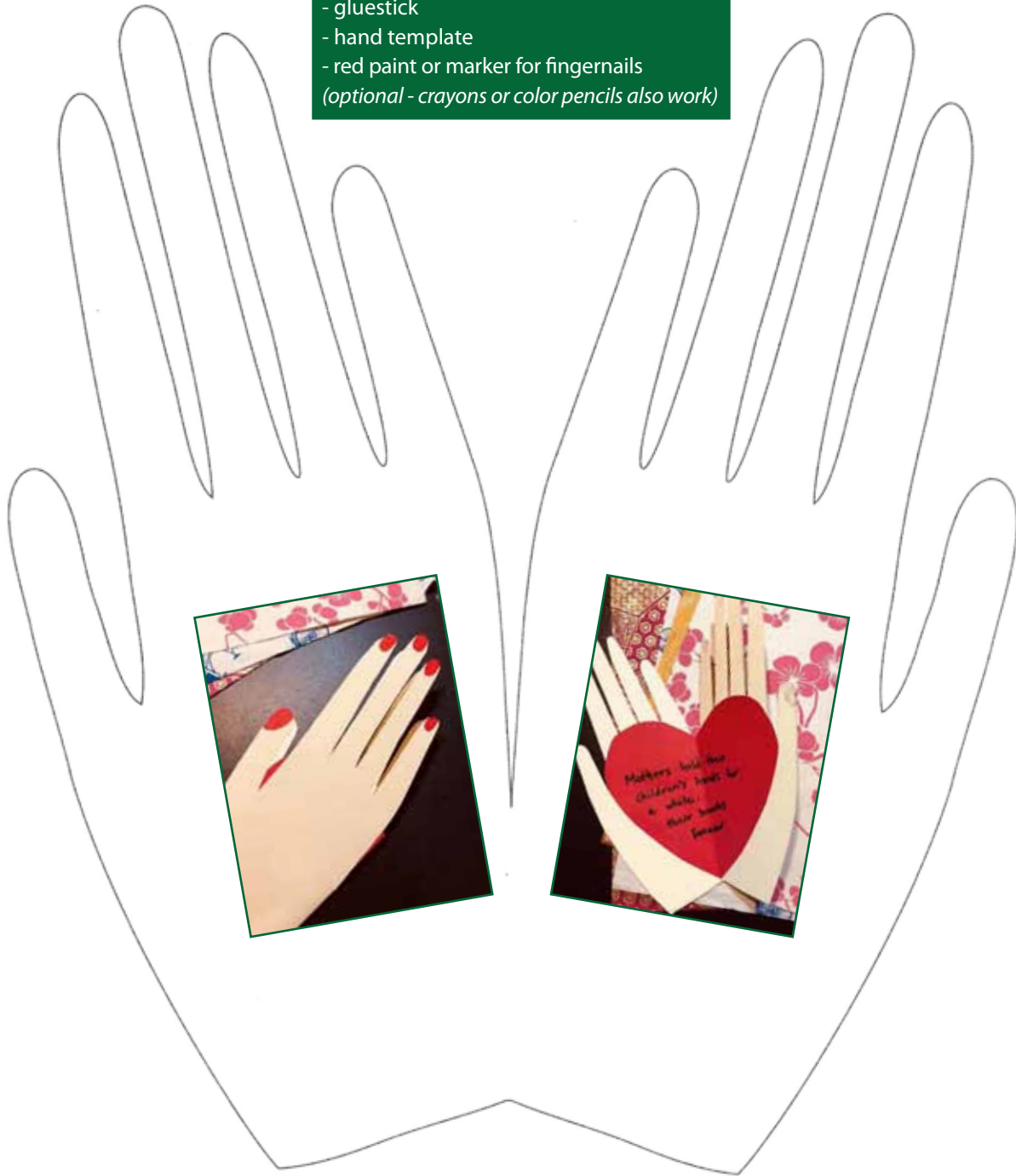


MAKE-IT-FUN *with Caroline*

Make a card for Mom - and then make one for our friends in nursing homes

Materials You Will Need:

- paper or scrapbook paper
- gluestick
- hand template
- red paint or marker for fingernails
- (optional - crayons or color pencils also work)*



DIRECTIONS

1. Trace hands or cut out the ones above and trace onto paper of choice.
2. Draw a heart to cover most of the palms of both hands onto different paper of choice.
3. Glue the bottom portion of the heart onto the inside of the hands.
4. Paint or color nails onto the top of the hands when hands are folded with heart inside.



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Let's get real.

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for our "Real Parent Talk" sessions.

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and answers to your parenting
questions - all from the comfort
of your own home.

Get connected. We're here to help!

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on Facebook!**
facebook.com/BSFNrv



FAMILY

"Like branches on a tree, we all *grow* in different directions. Yet *our roots* remain as one."

- Unknown