



Welcome to Issue #2 of the TDSB Psychology Newsletter, where we aim to provide caregivers with helpful information, tips, and ideas to use at home with their children.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: Staying Healthy Through Gratitude by Elizabeth Alexander, M.A., C.Psych.Assoc. (Supervised Practice)

Practicing gratitude helps us to be mindful.

Especially when stressed, practicing gratitude can calm us and make us feel grounded by reminding us of who we are, what is important to us, and what gives our lives meaning.

At least once a day, finish the sentence:
“Today I’m grateful for...”

It can be anything at all, from the scent of lilacs as you walk down a street, to the bed you sleep in.

Don’t worry about what others might think. Gratitude is personal.

To practice gratitude, try:

- Journaling (writing, video, photos, etc.)
- Sharing at dinner or other family tradition time
- Using a gratitude app
- Writing a thank you note
- Giving a sincere compliment or offering to help others
- And more...

HELPING KIDS GET ALONG DURING COVID-19

by Rachel Horton, Ph.D, C.Psych.

With families spending so much time living in close quarters, it’s natural for siblings to get on each other’s nerves. Here are a few tips for helping kids to get along:

1. **Assign everyone their own space:** If each child has their own room, these spaces can act as “cool down” zones. If children share rooms, or if they tend to gravitate to one room, creating separate spaces for younger children or work stations for teens allows everyone to feel like they have their own place to retreat to when needed.
2. **Let kids work it out on their own (with a bit of help):** It’s normal for children to engage in some bickering throughout the day. Farber and Mazlish (authors of *Siblings Without Rivalry*) recommend that caregivers voice each child’s concern (e.g., “You both want to play with the iPad, but there is only one – this is a tough problem”) and then invite the children to come up with solutions, perhaps helping them brainstorm a few ideas, before walking away to let them sort it out. This technique works on a few different levels: a) Parents don’t take sides, which discourages further sibling rivalry and resentment, b) Both children feel as though their concerns matter, c) Children practice problem-solving and how to get along independently.
3. **If things get dangerous, physically or emotionally (e.g., hurtful names):** Intervene, give voice to the problem, and separate children to let them cool down (e.g., “Wow! Things are getting way too heated in here and someone is going to get hurt! Quick, everyone to their cool down zone!”). Once everyone has calmed down, invite them to return to the situation and go back to step 2.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with children fighting at home, remember that you are not alone and that sibling conflict is bound to occur, especially these days. It may not seem like a silver lining now, but the skills children learn from resolving conflict ultimately build resilience, cooperation, and leadership.



DID YOU KNOW?

by Ashley Brunsek, M.Ed., M.A.

Self-regulation is the ability to manage our emotional responses to fit with the demands of a situation. It includes being able to calm ourselves down when we become frustrated, to resist highly emotional reactions (like yelling or screaming) when angered, and to adjust our thinking and expectations when things don’t go as planned. It is a set of skills that helps us to direct our behaviour towards achieving our goals.

Children aren’t born with these skills but are born with the potential to develop them. They develop self regulation through interactions with adults in their environment, who act as ‘regulators’ until children can use these skills on their own (e.g. rocking a child to sleep, or encouraging a child to take a deep breath when they’re crying).

Some key ways to support self-regulation:

Provide as much consistency and predictability as possible: Setting clear expectations and predictable routines can help children understand what to expect, which in turn helps them to feel more calm, secure, and regulated.

Accept your child’s emotions and emotional responses: Children often do the best they can with the skills they have. Big emotional reactions are a signal that children need help with regulation. Allowing them to feel their emotions will communicate that all emotions are safe and not something to be avoided/feared.

Talk about your own feelings: Children are always learning, and modelling is a great teaching tool. Explain how you are feeling, why you’re feeling that way, and what helps you to move through that emotion. Talking about your emotions teaches children to talk about theirs!

OUR ARTICLES, TIPS, AND SUGGESTIONS DO NOT CONSTITUTE TREATMENT ADVICE.

IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER IS IN CRISIS, PLEASE CONTACT KIDS HELP PHONE: 1-800-668-6868 OR THE DISTRESS CENTRE: 416-408-4357



ASK THE PSYCH EXPERT

by Michele Palk, M.Psy.,
C.Psych.Assoc. (Supervised Practice)

Question: "How can I help my child tolerate uncertainty about the future, given the current circumstances?"

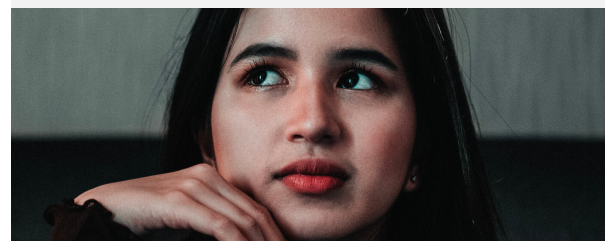
You may have noticed your child is now more clingy, needs more reassurance, and is experiencing more worry, stress, and frustration.

Although these are all normal reactions to sudden change, they may also indicate that your child is feeling uncertain about the future (i.e. when they can see family and friends again, what a return to school will be like, etc.)

Here are some tips to help your child learn how to tolerate current and future uncertainty:

- 1 Let your child know there is a difference between what they can control (i.e. their behaviour, choices, attitude) and what they can't control (i.e., how long social distancing will be needed).
- 2 Model how to respond to stressful times by coping with worries in healthy ways (i.e., focus on the present, establish healthy sleep, exercise, relaxation and other routines, etc.)
- 3 Encourage your child to let you know how they are feeling. This lets them know you care, and encourages them to be more aware of, and open about, their experiences.

Providing your child opportunities to take charge of the present can help them learn how to tolerate uncertainty about the future.



THE LEARNING SPACE

Learning Disabilities: A Snapshot

by Al Gorewich, M.Sc., C.Psych.

- **What is a Learning Disability?** A Learning Disability is a disorder that affects the way a person takes in, remembers, or uses information related to learning. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, an individual with a Learning Disability has evidence of average thinking and reasoning skills combined with difficulty processing information in one or more areas.
- **What areas of learning can a Learning Disability affect?** Learning Disabilities can interfere with reading, writing, math, and/or oral language.
- **How common are Learning Disabilities?** Approximately 5 to 10% of Canadians have some form of Learning Disability.
- **How is a Learning Disability diagnosed?** A Learning Disability is diagnosed using a comprehensive psychological assessment done by a qualified member of the College of Psychologists (e.g., a psychologist, psychological associate).
- **What are some ways to support a student with a Learning Disability?** A student can be supported with accommodations such as assistive technology, direct instruction in specific skills, and/or strategies designed to focus on the student's strengths.
- **Where can I get more information about Learning Disabilities?** The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario is a great site for more information on learning disabilities. If you have further questions regarding Learning Disabilities, you can contact your school psychology professional through your school administration.

RESOURCES

TOLERATING UNCERTAINTY

[Building your tolerance for uncertainty](#)

[Befriending Uncertainty](#)

SELF-REGULATION

[Child Mind Institute: Helping Kids with Self-Reg](#)

LEARNING DISABILITIES

[International Dyslexia Association Ontario](#)

[LD@Home](#)
[LDAC](#)

GRATITUDE

[9 best gratitude apps to to be more thankful every day](#)

CONNECT WITH US



If you are looking for support from TDSB Psychological Services for your child, please contact your school's administration.

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