



*From TDSB Psychological Services to Your Family*



Welcome to Issue #1 of the TDSB Psychology Newsletter! Every two weeks, we aim to provide caregivers with helpful information, tips, and ideas to use at home with their children.



### *Helpful Hints by Dr. Monica Apostol: Staying in the moment when you are feeling overwhelmed*



Take a deep breath and pay attention to what it feels like in your nose, chest, and belly.

Write “take a deep breath” on a sticky note and attach it to the fridge or the bathroom mirror (or have it on the wallpaper of your phone).

For an instant boost of relaxation, make your exhale twice as long as your inhale.

It’s the breath pattern that tells your brain that you are not in danger.

Watch your thoughts, and catch yourself when you’re worrying about the future or dwelling in the past.

Your breath can become your strongest ally and can bring you back to the present.

## 5 TIPS FOR REMOTE LEARNING

*By the Hearts & Minds Committee*

Try these strategies to make remote learning more positive and less stressful for everyone involved:

**Focus on wellbeing, and learning will come:** Learning can happen in many ways, as long as a child is happy, curious, and engaged. Household tasks like cooking, doing chores, crafts, and imaginative play are all great forms of learning!

**Stay flexible:** Do what suits your family’s unique needs to get the job done, and don’t expect each day to be the same.

**Decide on a few “anchor” events:** Anchors – like lunch time, bath time, or free play – provide structure to our day. Anchors can occur in the same order or at roughly the same time of day. Remember: even simple routines are comforting & helpful for staying calm and focused.

**Make schoolwork less intimidating:** Make a short checklist, briefly review yesterday’s work, or set a work timer. Try the “Sandwich Approach”: Easy task >> harder task >> easy task >> break.... (repeat).

**Making mistakes is part of learning:** Challenges and mistakes are necessary for learning and resiliency. If your child wants help, ask them to first try on their own & then clarify what they need from you. Keep in mind, all children learn differently but mistakes can help them just as much as support can!



## DID YOU KNOW?

*By the Hearts & Minds Committee*

Some increase in screen time is understandable and expected given the current circumstances.

Researchers studying the brain, vision, and technology suggest using the **20-20-20 Rule**:

For every 20 minutes of screen time, take a break to focus your eyes on something 20 feet away, for 20 seconds.

Children also benefit from a screen break every once in a while. (It’s good for their bodies, too!)

When possible, avoid using screens during mealtimes and at least one hour before bed.

Try to model appropriate screen use to your children, when possible.

**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**



## LEARNING CORNER

Helping kids improve their reading during school closure

by Dr. Sara Zimmerman

**Reading to your child** helps expand their vocabulary and general knowledge, and it exposes them to new ideas. They also become familiar with the more formal and complex language structures found in books.

**Read to your child in any language**, using any materials that they enjoy. Share discussions about opinions of the characters, what they would do in similar circumstances, or what they think will happen next. **Visit [Unite For Literacy](#) for free online books that can be read in many languages.**

**Read the same books** or materials with older children, and then discuss what you both think and what you like about them.

**When children practice, their reading usually improves.** Experienced readers learn to read words accurately instead of skipping or guessing at words. Experienced readers also read fluently, with expression. As reading gets better, so does the understanding of what they're reading.

**Encourage reading of any sort.** Books, comics, recipes, or cereal boxes - all forms of reading are useful. Don't forget, children need to be interested in what they read! **Visit the [TDSB Virtual Library](#) for free reading resources!**

**Even reading "easy books" improve children's skills**, and will help get them ready for the next school year!

## ASK THE PSYCH EXPERT

by Dr. Afroze Anjum

**Question: My 9 year old child is always tired, wakes up frequently, and asks to sleep with us. Can I do anything to help? Also, why does my teen sleep until noon?**

Your child's sleep patterns may change during this uncertain time; they may be extra 'clingy' at bedtime or they may have trouble sleeping. Children of all ages may need extra support or comfort during the night.

Consider these tips to promote good sleep hygiene for children:

- Aim for a *consistent bedtime & wake-up time* with 9-11 hours of sleep for school-aged children.
- Use *calming bedtime rituals*, like a warm bath, story time in bed, soft music, etc.
- If they come to your room, *walk them back to bed* as many times as you need while *validating their feelings*.
- During the day, *find time to connect with your child* about what might be bothering them at night.
- *Keep bright lights (devices, etc.) out of their room*, as these can further delay the release of melatonin (a sleep hormone).
- *Open curtains and turn on the lights* when it's time to wake up.

Teenagers' sleep cycles shift (due to a later release of melatonin around 11 p.m.) so it's important to stick to a sleep schedule with an extra hour of sleep on weekends. They should try to avoid heavy exercise, eating, or caffeine right before bed.

If your child or teen is experiencing prolonged sleep challenges, please consult with your doctor about a possible referral to a specialist.



### RESOURCES

#### WELL-BEING

[Taking care of yourself while sharing space](#)

[Remote Learning - TDSB MHWB](#)

[School Mental Health Ontario: Self-Care 101](#)

[What's Up Walk In Virtual Clinics](#)

#### SLEEPING

Sick Kids Hospital: [Sleep for Teens](#)

Sick Kids Hospital: [Sleep for Children](#)

[Sleep Foundation](#)

[Harvard Medical School: Sleep](#)

### CONNECT WITH US



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



[@TDSB Psych](#)  
[@TDSB MHWB](#)



Coming Soon!