



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL

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Good day!

As we approach our second week of uncharted waters, I want to reassure you that you are doing a great job!!!! No one said perfect-but you are doing great! Everyone feels disoriented...no Mass in our Church, no classes in our school, we can't go into our favorite restaurants, that relaxing pedicure you were putting off will have to wait...need I say more? But know that you are not alone in your feelings, which I bet, overall, are mostly LOVE amidst the stress.

As my Mother used to say, "I have the four of you..and there is no user's guide"...pretty swift observation, even though she DID know ALOT- she received the General Excellence Award at her Graduation from Saint Peter's High School in Staten Island and also graduated from the Saint Vincent's School of Nursing (and believe me, she never let us forget either of those two facts); her second and third "Bibles" were the Merck Manual and Dr. Spock's BABY AND CHILD CARE and she was still overwhelmed sometimes! What she said is true...we have the full gravity of taking care of our darling offspring, our "prized possessions", and in many ways...despite all that we know, it can get confusing!

I want to let you know that I commiserate with you also in your lack of YOU TIME...every parent works, every parent has a tremendous responsibility, and we all have our limits. For some, your YOU TIME may have been that train ride when you got to put in your earphones, block out the world, and listen to music, maybe it was a tennis game, a manicure, watching March Madness, going for a run, or planning to lie down on the couch for twenty minutes before you rush out again to pick up your children. Now, your YOU TIME is diminished. It's stressful. When do YOU get to reenergize? I think that's when it's time to look at ourselves and our loved ones and say, "Nobody is perfect." Deal with that reality! Everyone is trying their best..we all have our strengths and weaknesses, and we CANNOT be perfect!

As my absolute, favorite, go-to 2Corinthians 12:9-11 Gospel says:

"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness...when I am weak, then I am strong.'

So, although we may feel weakened: We are STRONG! SJS STRONG! We will come out even stronger...as a neighbor, as a friend, as a sibling, as a parent, as a child, as a family, as a school, as a community...because we are TOGETHER, EVEN THOUGH WE ARE temporarily APART.

The first reading is an excerpt from an email that Michael Deegan, Superintendent of NY Archdiocese Catholic Schools, included in his email to the Principals last evening: just beautiful. Since you HAVE TO GIVE of yourself even more now than ever (when you may not have thought it was possible), take comfort and re-energize as you ponder St. Francis' words.



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A beautiful message from Pope Francis. He says: "Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...Life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you." Let us all remember then that every changing color of a leaf is beautiful and every changing situation of life is meaningful, both need very clear vision. So do not grumble or complain, let us instead remember that Pain is a sign that we are alive, Problems are a sign that we are strong and Prayer is a sign we are not alone!! If we can acknowledge these truths and condition our hearts and minds, our lives will be more meaningful, different and worthwhile!"

Secondly, I found this (long), but powerful article that let's us realize that most of the world is feeling as we are given the fact that our children are out of their routines, particularly their learning routines:

From: You Are Not Your Child's Teacher You are their parent. You don't need to panic about educating your child during quarantine. Amidst the chaos of schools and offices closing, spring break cancellations, and frantic grocery hoarding, parents now feel that they must take on the full weight of their child's education...parents bemoan their inability to teach math, worry about their children falling behind, and throw up their hands at the idea of working a full-time job and somehow educating their kids. You might feel the same way. You might be thinking, right now, How on earth am I supposed to be my child's teacher, on top of everything else? Take a deep breath. Now, say this out loud: "I am not my child's teacher. I am their parent."

"You have not suddenly become a home-school teacher overnight... the responsibility of reading, writing, and arithmetic still lies with their school. While teachers and school systems are working on ways to best meet standards in this new, uncharted world of large-scale virtual learning, parents can calm themselves. You do not need to run out and purchase a home-school curriculum. You do not need to watch YouTube videos on teaching seventh grade Common Core math. You do not need to cram every hour of your child's day with educational advancement. Your primary focus should be where it always has been: on the well-being of your child. Children thrive on routine and right now, all of that is gone. As a parent, you can provide a framework that keeps their brains active, as you likely already do in the summer."



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Academic achievement and testing benchmarks are a construct, constantly adjusted to fit educational philosophies. Don't worry about them right now. Worry about supporting your children as they process what is happening in the world. The entire world is standing still. Your child is not falling behind. When school starts again on the other side of quarantine-in May or in September or whenever-every teacher will remember, and take into account, that nearly every child in the world experienced the same learning hiatus. Kids will still get into college; they'll still learn long division and the difference between the executive and the legislative branch; they'll still learn to read, write, and think, even if they do nothing with this time but binge Netflix and snuggle with you when your work is done. The greater risk to our children, and ourselves, is the stress we are adding to all our lives by believing that parents have to take on the full weight of education. The lesson to be learned from home-schoolers (and teachers) is that what kids need goes far beyond classroom instructional time. A typical homeschool schedule for elementary school kids only has about two to three hours a day. The balance of each day is filled with exploration, reading, household tasks, and learning to manage boredom. Your child's school schedule is much the same. Hours of their day are spent not on memorizing facts and learning new concepts, but on social interaction, games, and daily classroom tasks. Once you have relieved yourself of the burden of educating your children, you can shift your focus to teaching them how to cope with the unexpected. This is a time to lean in to your children, providing them with extra love and support. Spend the time you would have been commuting cooking together. Spend your lunch break eating as a family and read together afterward. Start game night traditions if your evening sports are canceled. Agree to a family walk once a day, before work requires your online presence. Your children are going to remember how they felt during the COVID-19 outbreak, not what they missed in math class. Instead of fighting with your children about their schoolwork, focus on surviving and thriving as a family unit. This may mean shifting your kids' schedules so that their time with you is on the weekend, and weekdays are full of TVs and tablets. That is OK. It may mean that you are happiest with an intricate schedule packed with all the resources schools, libraries, and publishers are providing. It may also mean that, like me, you are wearing noise-canceling headphones, sitting on the floor of the playroom, working on your laptop while the children run amok. These scenarios, and everything in between, should be considered perfect parenting. If your children feel supported and loved, and if everyone is going to bed mostly happy, make yourself a tinfoil star and put it on your computer right now. (Or, if you hate crafts, eat an Oreo.) You are winning. I can't promise you that everything is going to be OK. But I can promise you that if your child learns nothing during this pandemic but how to deal with the unexpected and how to care for themselves amid chaos, they will have learned more than any book could teach them. You are not your child's teacher, but you are the parent.



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Take a deep breath 5 From: Educating The Whole Child At Home During Quarantine: Helping kids cope with anxiety and learn from life-Diary of a Teacher During the Coronavirus Crisis <https://iamaneducator.com/2020/03/18/educating-the-whole-child-at-home-during-quarantine-helping-kids-cope-with-anxiety-and-learn-from-life-diary-of-a-teacher-during-the-coronavirus-crisis-ent> As the coronavirus news continues to worsen, I am determined to build a positive space at home to help my two kids understand what is happening in our world-in an age appropriate way-and contribute what I can to the struggle to uplift the most vulnerable people during this crisis... I know even for myself, there have been moments over the last few days where I have felt it's easier to teach a class of 30 kids than to have my own two boys at home all day. Part of that, I know, is because of the difficult circumstances we are under. My household is increasingly feeling the stress as the coronavirus crisis mounts around the world. My 7-year-old boy is especially anxious about not being able to see friends or his first grade class. And I am sure, as much as I have tried to hide it, both of my boys are picking up on my anxiety about the increasing restrictions to public life... One thing I realized from our day is that the new homeschooling moment that many millions of us around the country have found ourselves in doesn't have to look like kids doing work packets. You can cover a lot of subjects-and kids can get a deep and meaningful education-by simply engaging them about these unprecedented times. If your kids are begging for worksheets and need that structure, by all means provide them for them. But for all the parents who are at home with their kids right now, please don't pressure yourself to make sure that your kids are keeping pace, day by day, with the regular curriculum they were getting at school. School districts should refrain from requiring the endless filling out of worksheets-because it could put students at risk for missing the deeper education that this moment affords.... As tough a time as it is right now, we can also make this into an opportunity to expand the definition and purpose of education. Now, more than ever, we need education to address the moment we are in as a society and we need education to be relevant to our children's lives. Taking the time to keep our kids connected to their friends and family is education. Having our kids express their creativity is education. Talking to our kids about good hygiene and how to stop the spread of coronavirus is education. Taking time away from standard school lessons to just relax and engage in film studies on the couch with the kids can be an important way unwind and manage stress. Investigating the distribution of wealth in America and showing kids how inequality is making coronavirus more dangerous to our communities is a deeply valuable education. And what I have discovered, most of all, is that taking the time to discuss our feelings with our kids is the best education we could possibly give to our children."



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Please keep these readings handy and re-read as necessary! Know that I am here to hear from you, and that our incredibly cutting-edge, dedicated SJS teachers are working feverishly to design protocols and lessons to teach your children the best way possible.

Stay safe!

SJS STRONG and Distance Learning!

God bless you and yours!

Respectfully,

Mary Ellen Sanchez
Principal, Saint Joseph School



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