

February 2021

# Pondering Parenting

*Every month SMFCSD's Counselor Wellness Team will share with you stories and guidance based in the 3R's: Routines, Relationships and Regulation, to help your family navigate the everyday puzzles that arise in supporting your learner(s).*

## Cultivating Kindness

*By Aridai Tapia, School Counselor, and Stephanie Ruiz, School Counselor*

### **The Challenge:**

We are living a time where we are feeling overwhelmed, unmotivated and uneasy. Kids are feeling it too, but might not have the words or emotional agility to express their emotions.

We can cultivate kindness and compassion by making space for them to process their emotions. This is a safe space for you and your child to open up about feelings and emotions that come up for your whole family. Tending to their intense emotions helps children be restored and renewed, which in turn prepares them to serve others.

A very important part of modeling kindness and compassion is being kind and compassionate to ourselves. Have you heard the saying you can't pour out of an empty cup? If you don't have kindness and compassion for yourself, it is really hard to show it to others. We are our biggest critics. We constantly beat ourselves up. We may not feel like a good enough parent. We are here to remind you to give yourself credit—You are parenting during a pandemic!

When we practice self-kindness and self-compassion, we mindfully accept that these uncertain times are hard, but we embrace ourselves with kindness and care in response, reminding ourselves that making mistakes is a human experience.

### **Regulation**

We believe that Regulation is the foundation for success. Regulation is the ability to manage impulses and big emotions.

- Mindfulness and kindness go hand in hand. Model mindfulness and kindness for your children. For example, what quality of attention do we bring when we interact with our kids? Do we give them our full attention – eye contact, kneeling down to speak with them, asking questions – or are we distracted? Kids are extraordinarily observant, and they pick up on whether we are paying attention to them. By modeling behavior, and through our interactions, we show them what it's like to be seen and heard and to be compassionate with others.

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- Another simple activity is to relax and feel your natural breath for a few moments at the end of each day. Kids need to be active and run around, of course, but they can also benefit from cultivating a bit of stillness. For example, when everyone sits down together at the dinner table, encourage everyone to take five in- and out-breaths together.
  - Find two minutes to give a loved one a compliment. Before dinner, have each person at the table give a compliment to the person on their left.

## **Relationships**

We know that one thing that this pandemic has taught us is that we are in this together and together is the only way we will get through this. That is why kindness and relationships are both so important right now. Although interaction might be limited, there are still many other opportunities to connect. We encourage you to invite your child to join you.

- Schedule regular video chats with extended family members and tell them how much you love and appreciate them.
- Reach out to call a friend, family member or neighbour who is experiencing loneliness or self-isolation.
- Send an inspirational quote to a friend.
- With other members of your family, watch videos or read books that highlight kindness.
- Write kind notes to family members.
- Write letters to friends to let them know how much you appreciate them.
- Offer to send someone a takeaway or a meal.

## **Routines**

We believe that when Routines are consistent, expected and created with your child, they will support resilience-building during difficult times.

- Instill the practice of gratitude and write in a gratitude journal. [Here](#) is an example. This article on [How a Gratitude Journal Can Make Your Child Happier](#) may be useful to you.
- Implement a loving-kindness practice, a type of meditation that can help develop compassion for others, and crucially for the self. See a sample script [here](#).
- Combine the concepts of mindfulness and kindness and teach a caring practice to your kids. Consider doing this first thing in the morning or right before bed. These phrases work well for children: *May I be safe, may I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be peaceful.*

## **Additional Resources**

### **Videos:**

- [Kind Wishes: A Family Practice](#)
- [Cultivating Resilience Through Kindness](#)
- [Read Aloud: Be Kind | A Children's Story About Things that Matter](#)
- [See Amable Contigo Mismo](#)
- [Hay Que Ser Valiente Para Ser Amable](#)

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**Articles:**

- [Kindness Vs. Cruelty: Helping Kids Hear The Better Angels Of Their Nature](#)
- [Cultivating Compassion in Our Kids](#)
- [Sparking Joy: A Mindfulness Practice for Everyday](#)
- [How to Be a Kindness Role Model for Your Kids](#)
- How Sharing Kindness Can Make You Healthier and Happier [Spanish](#) [English](#)