

Parenting During the Coronavirus Pandemic: Westport Together Webinar Follow-Up

A month and a half into our evolving distance learning period, there is no missing the stresses on students, families, and our community, even as we take pride in the resourcefulness and resilience that Westport has shown. Last week, Westport Together presented a wonderfully informative webinar, [Parenting High School Juniors and Seniors During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), featuring expert advice for parents from Karen Krupnik, LPC, Positive Directions, Dr. Valerie Babich, WPS Coordinator of Psychological Services, and our own Deb Slocum, School Counselor and co-founder of the Staples Resilience Project. While the entire conversation is well worth the watch, here are a few take-aways:

Karen Krupnik: Recognize that teens, for whom it is developmentally appropriate to exert their independence, have lost not only their autonomy, but access to their vitally important peers and much of their privacy, as they are home with their parents 24/7. Try to listen and validate your teen's emotions, and to de-escalate them, when necessary, with your own calm demeanor. Be sure to model self-care for them (including sleep, exercise, and fun), and, of course, be compassionate with yourself.

Deborah Slocum: With the newness of distance learning wearing off, students may find their academic motivation waning at this point. Helpful tips for students include:

- using a calendar to keep track of required class meetings and extra help sessions
- referring to Schoology and PowerSchool, create a daily "must-do" list
- create a daily schedule, with a designated "school time"
- encourage students to reach out to teachers and counselors

If students are completing their schoolwork, sleeping enough, and staying connected with their families during this difficult time, that is truly enough. For parents of juniors, the key word is "flexibility." Try not to panic over cancellations (college tours, test dates, summer jobs and internships). Instead, focus on what can be controlled and encourage your children to use this time to pursue interests they might otherwise not have the time for, whether learning a new instrument or language, reading deeply on a subject of interest, or creating art.

Valerie Babich: A key issue for parents of seniors is how to help them launch when they can't even leave the house. Her great advice is to:

- make sure that they are proficient at basic life skills (preparing meals, doing laundry, grocery shopping, and contributing to family life)
- encourage them to work on their time management skills now, as this will be crucial to them next year
- have those important conversations with them that you rarely have time for otherwise: on managing money, understanding budgets, drugs/alcohol on campus, sexual assault and consent.

Our heartfelt gratitude to Karen, Deb, and Valerie for their thoughtful insights and to our entire staff for their incredible dedication, compassion, and energy on behalf of our students and families!

The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples Guidance Department aimed to promote the well-being of our students and foster a positive, inclusive school community.

shs.westportps.org/departments/guidance/staples-resilience-project