

# Monthly Newsletter

# FAMILY TIMES

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Moore Public Schools  
MENTAL HEALTH TEAM



## Caregiver Corner

by Rendy Janssen, LMFT

### Modeling Feeling Expressions for Kids:

Kids learn how to express feelings by what the adults model or show to them. When you experience different feelings you can name them to your child to help them understand your emotions as well as to help them learn how to identify different feelings that they experience. Similarly, when you see your child experiencing anger, sadness, or frustration label that for them: "It looks like you're angry that your brother took your toy". In addition, normalizing those feelings is helpful to kids, i.e., "I'd feel angry too if someone took away what I was working on". At that point you can offer a solution of what might be helpful for the child to do when they are angry or offer an idea of what you do when you experience a similar situation. Giving your child the words to express feelings can help decrease negative behavioral outbursts as well.

## Community Events

by Elizabeth Asplin, CTRS/L

### February

- 3rd** Friday Gallery Walk: Paseo Art District; Free admission
- 4th** Yukon Chocolate Festival 1pm-3pm: Adults \$15, Children \$10. Admission includes 10 treat samples per ticket.
- 10-12th** OKC Cinderella Ballet: Please visit the Civic Center Music hall for prices and show times. Sensory Friendly shows available.
- 25-26th** Library Book Sale: Oklahoma State Fair Park. Free Admission.





# Mental Health Discussion

By Summer King, LPC & LADC/MH

## Parental Affection and Children's Happiness:

Research in a variety of areas from brain development to physical health outcomes has shown a link between affection in childhood and overall happiness in their future. Warmth and affection expressed by parents to their children results in life-long positive outcomes. Affection has been linked to higher self-esteem, improved academic performance,

better parent-child communication, and fewer psychological and behavioral problems. The brain actually changes as a result of affection. Oxytocin is a chemical in the brain released during times when a person feels love and connection. So how do you develop greater affection in your family? It is important to focus on investing in the time and taking cues from your children. Those that are

infants could benefit from skin-to-skin contact, holding, rocking, etc. As they get older, be playful by doing fun activities together like dancing, playing a favorite game, etc. It is important to be intentional and include reminders for incorporating hugs and affection in your daily routine if this has not been something done regularly before. Communicating and including your child's

consent for affection helps to learn what kinds of affection are most meaningful to them while also sharing in the power dynamic to have the most impact. Respect individual comfort levels and be aware that this will change as they go through different stages of development.

*Source: How a Parent's Affection Shapes a Child's Happiness for Life (gottman.com)*



## Family Connections

By Elizabeth Asplin, CTRS/L

**Family Valentines Date:** Do something special with your family this February. Cook dinner, go to the park, ice skating, or have a movie night!

**Family Reading Night:** Grab your favorite books and get comfy in your home. Spend some time diving into a book together and talk about why you love this story and the characters inside.

**Volunteer Card Making:** Volunteer to make Valentines cards for our Police officers, local nursing home, hospital, or local shelters.



“The Golden Rule of Parenting is do unto your children as you wish your parents had done unto you!”

—Louise Hart

## Academic Tools to Support Learning

By Katy Creecy, MSW, LCSW

Creativity is key in becoming an effective problem-solver. Here are 4 ways that you can foster this skill in your children:

1. Be curious: Connect with your children through their interests. Use local resources (e.g. library, community events) to connect them to more information and experiences.
2. Let creativity flow: Find a common household item (e.g. paper clip) and have your child name all the possible uses. This builds

fluency and flexible thinking.

- Make mistakes: Allow mistakes to be learning opportunities. Model this yourself for your children to see you adapt.
- Never stop learning: Ask your child open-ended questions (e.g., “What do you think?” or “Why did that happen?”) to develop critical thinking skills.

*Source: Reading Rockets*





# D.I.F.Y– Do It For Yourself

by Davene Findlay-Williams, MSW, LCSW

## Challenge 2:

### Take a time out from social media!

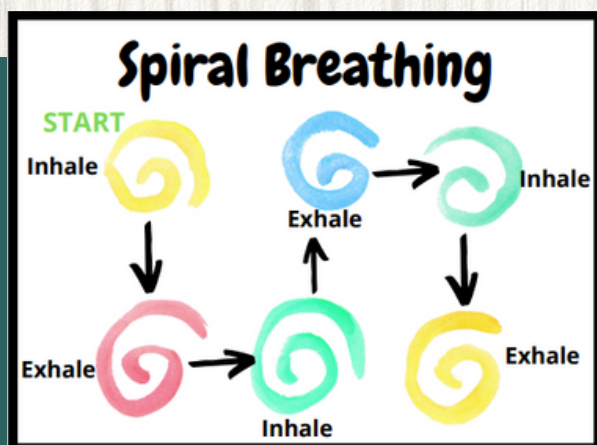
Scrolling through social media pages can distract us from being present in our lives, while also influencing us to make comparisons between ourselves and those we see on social media. You can start by scheduling certain times of the day to check your social media feeds. This way the break doesn't feel like it's being taken away—it's just limited. This form of self-care gives you a break from comparing yourself to others and instead be fully present in daily life.



## Spiral Breathing

by Elizabeth Asplin, CTRS/L

- Starting with the first spiral, put your finger on the tail end and slowly trace it back to the center of the spiral while inhaling slowly.
- Then move your finger down following the direction of the arrow.
- Again, place your finger on the tail end and slowly trace it back to the center of the spiral while exhaling slowly.
- Continue this pattern until you have reached the end.





## 2

# INGREDIENT PANCAKES



### Ingredients:

- 3 bananas (ripe)
- 3 eggs (lightly beaten)

### Directions:

1. Mash bananas well.
2. Whisk in eggs until well combined.
3. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a low-medium heat.
4. Pour in 1/3 of a cup of the batter.
5. Cook until bubbles form all over the surface and flip.
6. Cook a further 1-2 minutes and serve.

Source: *Kids Spot*



## So, Your Child Wants a Phone

By Taylor Wright, LPC-NCC

### Apps for kids – do YOUR homework.

More than 80,000 apps are labeled as educational, but little research has demonstrated their actual quality. Selecting apps is not a popularity contest. Every child's needs and interests are different, and an app that makes sense for one child may not necessarily make sense — or be healthy — for another. Before downloading any app to your child's device, below are 5 questions you can ask yourself in determining if this app is right for your child and your family:

1. **Who does the app connect my child with?** If the app allows your kid to communicate with other users — beyond playing games against each other — consider who those people are. If you decide that an app is safe, set conditions with your child and discuss what's considered inappropriate to share, such as personal information, photos, and videos that you don't want seen by the public, or hurtful comments.
2. **How does the app make money?** Some apps have a straightforward one-time fee or monthly subscription plans. But watch out for apps that require additional in-app purchases to unlock basic features. The most problematic money-making strategy comes from apps that make money by bombarding kids with ads that may not be appropriate.
3. **What is the app teaching my child?** Identify how the app keeps your child engaged. Does it provide high-quality content, or does it use cheap tricks that may lead to unhealthy habits?
4. **Is my child's information protected?** Many apps ask for a child's name or age to personalize it or verify that the user is old enough. But be cautious of apps that ask for too much information, such as their address or geolocation.
5. **Does the app align with my child's abilities?** The first four questions lead to this final and most important one: Based on what I know about my child, does the app seem like a good match? Take into consideration your child's age, maturity level, and ability to self-regulate.

Lastly, I will leave you with a helpful resource, like Common Sense Media for reviews about age-appropriate apps, games, and programs to guide you in making the best choices for your children.

Source: *Raising Successful Kids*, *HealthyChildren*

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