

# FAMILY TIMES

Provided by the MPS Mental Health Team



## Caregiver Corner

BY RENDY JANSSEN, LMFT

### Choices

Giving kids choices can help create independence and autonomy, develop confidence, give kids ownership in their actions and teach responsibility. But what if you just want your kid to get ready for bed, how do you give them choices? You can say, "Hey, it's time to get ready for bed, would you like to put on your pajamas first or brush your teeth first?" Giving choices allows the child to have a sense of control but also sets a parameter or boundary within the expectation. This can work in any action where there are multiple steps.

However, too many choices can be overwhelming. As you start utilizing this skill, start with just two choices. Be sure that you are okay with whatever choices you are offering! Okay, I'll give choices, but what happens when you give the get ready for bed choices and your kiddo says, "Neither, I want to watch more tv!"? You can repeat the choices, and let the child know if they do not choose then you will choose for them. Give encouragement when they make a choice, "Great choice, I like to brush my teeth first, too."



## Family Connection

BY ELIZABETH ASPLIN, CTRS/L

### Breakfast for Dinner

Pancakes, bacon and eggs, "OH MY!"  
Give breakfast for dinner a try!

### Yes Day

Let the kids decide what to do and what to eat for the day! Say yes to whatever it is they want to do for one whole day. Set some ground rules that work for your family, i.e., a budget for the day, all kids must agree, etc. See what joy and excitement comes from a 'YES'!

### Arts and Crafts

Find a box, cardboard paper towel rolls, cardboard toilet paper rolls, and get your crafting on! Grab your paints and markers and make something fun, crazy or beautiful!

## Community Events

### Date | Event

- 1st-14th Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park Presents- Macbeth: Myriad Botanical Gardens
- 5th First Friday Gallery Art Walk: Paseo Arts District 6pm-9pm
- 6th Pumpkin Harvest Craft Festival: Dale Robertson Center 9am-3pm
- 13th-12/31 The Polar Express: Oklahoma Railway Museum

**“Your kids require you most of all to love them for who they are, not to spend your whole time trying to correct them.” -BILL AYERS**



## Academic Tools to Support Learning

BY KATY CREECY, MSW, LCSW

Families can encourage writing activities by designating a “Writing Center” in the home. By including various supplies—paper in a variety of colors, pencils, markers, crayons, envelopes, dry erase board and markers—children will be more likely to start engaging in self-directed writing. Caregivers can collaborate and suggest projects, including making their own ABC book or creating a comic strip.

Source: Brookes Publishing Blog

## Mental Health Discussion

BY SUMMER KING, LPC & LADC/MH

Everyone has times in their life where they feel sad or down, however some children may feel helpless or hopeless, uninterested in things they used to enjoy, or have this persistent sadness that may lead to a diagnosis of depression. Depression may be seen in feeling sad, changes in eating or sleeping, difficulty paying attention, feeling worthless, useless, or guilty. Some depressed children may also have problems with motivation which may be seen as acting out, rather than understanding the cause being depression.

What can be done? It is important for children and youth to have someone to talk to about the source of their depression and finding a therapist is a great start. At home it is important to keep in mind whole body wellness – eating well, sleep schedules, and having physical activity every day.

Sources: Anxiety and Depression in Children | CDC

## Regulation Skill-Tense and Release

The body responds to stress with muscle tension, which can cause pain or discomfort. In turn, tense muscles relay to the body that it's stressed. That keeps the cycle of stress & muscle tension going. Tense & Release helps break this cycle by reducing muscle tension and general mental anxiety. Here's how to do it:

1. Take 3 deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.
2. Starting with the lowest part of your body, squeeze or tense your feet for 5 seconds. Then release and relax.
3. Continue to work your way up your body squeezing/tensing each body part for 5 seconds and then releasing/relaxing. Legs, Stomach, Shoulders, Arms, & Hands
4. Finish out with squeezing/tensing your whole body for 5 seconds and then releasing/relaxing the body.
5. Take 3 deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.







## Donut Apples

### INGREDIENTS

12 oz. cream cheese, softened, cut into thirds  
 2 tsp. honey, divided  
 1/2 c. melted chocolate  
 2 drops pink food coloring  
 3 apples  
 Assorted sprinkles, for decorating

### DIRECTIONS

- Divide cream cheese among three small bowls. In one bowl, add 1 teaspoon honey. In another bowl, add melted chocolate. In the last bowl, add remaining 1 teaspoon honey and pink food coloring. Stir each bowl together until combined.
- Slice apples and use a biscuit or cookie cutter to hollow out centers.
- Spread mixtures on apple slices and top with sprinkles.

Source: [delish.com](http://delish.com)

## Tech Talk

BY DAVENE FINDLAY-WILLIAMS, MSW, LCSW

### Social Media: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly!

Most children at the elementary level are already aware of social media and what it is. However, they may not know about the dangers and responsibilities that come with it. Let's talk about the different aspects of social media, the pros and the cons.

#### The Good:

Social media helps us stay connected with friends and family. It can also be used to help children/teens volunteer or get involved with a campaign, nonprofit, or charity. Many people use it to enhance their creativity by sharing ideas, music, and art, meet and interact with others who share similar interests. Others use it for social support.

#### The Bad/Ugly:

The flipside is that social media can be a hub for things like cyberbullying and questionable activities. Without meaning to, kids can share more online than they should. They usually post photos of themselves online or use their real names on their profiles. They reveal their birthdates and interests, post their school name and the town where they live. This can make them easy targets for online predators and others who might mean them harm.

Children can be contacted online by someone they don't know in a way that made them feel scared or uncomfortable. Also, spending too much time on social media can be a downer too. Seeing how many "friends" others have and the pictures of them having fun can make kids feel bad about themselves or like they don't measure up to their peers.

#### What Can Parents Do?

It's important to be aware of what your kids do online. But snooping can alienate them and damage the trust you've built together. The key is to stay involved in a way that makes your kids understand that you respect their privacy but want to make sure they're safe. Encourage your kids to be kind, think twice before hitting enter/send, use the privacy settings, don't post anything you wouldn't want your grandma to see, and do NOT "friend" strangers.

Parents also can help keep kids grounded in the real world by putting limits on media use. Keep computers in public areas in the house, avoid laptops and smartphones in bedrooms, and set some rules on the use of technology.

Most importantly, setting a good example through your own virtual behavior can go a long way toward helping your kids use social media safely.

## D.I.F.Y.- Do It For You

BY TAYLOR WRIGHT, LPC-NCC

75% of Americans are chronically dehydrated. Often times hydration is overlooked as a form of self-care; however, hydration is actually a very crucial step that helps in many different aspects of our overall health. Drinking water can prevent dehydration, a condition that can cause unclear thinking, resulting in mood change, foggy memory, irritability, cause your body to overheat, constipation, and even kidney stones. Proper hydration can positively impact, in large part, your overall productivity. According to studies, proper hydration works to promote good mental health, which can impact overall cognitive function. Even being the tiniest bit under-hydrated can affect your mood. Your body can start to trigger different areas of the brain that make you feel more anxious or nervous and can even heighten your emotions.

If staying hydrated is difficult for you, here are a few simple tips that can help: Keep a bottle of water with you during the day. If you don't like the taste of plain water, try adding a slice of lemon or lime to your drink. Drink water before, during, and after a workout. When you're feeling hungry, drink water. Thirst is often confused with hunger. True hunger will not be satisfied by drinking water. If you have trouble remembering to drink water, drink on a schedule. For example, drink a small glass of water at the beginning of each hour.