

Elementary Counselor Connection

St. Helens School District

4/6/2020

Dear Families,

Your elementary school counselors want you to know that during this school closure, we are thinking about you and we are here for you! Each week, we will have a little bit of information to share with you in your packets. This same information can be found on our webpages. Our topic this week is about the types of behavior changes you might see in your elementary-age child during this time.

Just like adults, children respond to stress in different ways. Elementary age children may:

- be more clingy
- feel anxious, irritated, agitated or angry
- have a change in appetite or sleep patterns
- ask the same questions over and over
- seem more easily confused or lack concentration
- withdraw from you or activities
- show signs of regression like bedwetting, thumb-sucking, tantruming, baby-talk, or playing with toys they enjoyed at a younger age

Children are struggling to find balance in a world that has been dramatically changed. Experiencing stress and working through behaviors like these are how the brain begins to adapt to the new situation. On the back of this page are some general reminders about how to support your child as they adjust to their new circumstances.

When to be concerned about behaviors and reach out for support:

- your child is causing injury to self or others
- the behaviors seem to be getting worse over a 3-week period
- feelings of worry or overwhelm are growing and don't show signs of improvement over a few weeks

If you have concerns about how your child is coping, school counselor contact numbers are on the back of this page along with other numbers for support. Your pediatrician can also be a great starting place if you have concerns.

With Warm Regards,

St. Helens Elementary School Counselors

Supporting Children During the Covid-19 School Closure

Children may have many questions about what the virus is, why schools are closed, and why they can't see their friends and family right now. Here are some thoughts:



Reassure children that you are doing everything that you can to keep them safe. Children are excellent at picking up on nonverbals, so when you talk about how they are feeling or about Covid-19, do your best to stay calm and steady.



Keep a consistent schedule as much as possible. Regular meals, bedtimes, and activities can help children feel safe and secure. Stay connected with your child's teacher and the learning opportunities provided. This familiar connection will bring a bit of normal to your child's day.



Even if you think they already know, remind children that they can talk with you about any worried or upset feelings or questions they have. Sometimes children will pick up on the fact that this is a stressful time for you, too, and they may feel like they don't want to bother you.



As a way of making sense of their new circumstances, children may ask you the same questions over and over or they may act out in ways described on the other side of this newsletter. Try and give them extra patience, loving words and physical affection.



Do your best to pay attention to what children hear on television or radio, and see online. Too much information focused on COVID-19 can cause children to experience increased anxiety. When you talk with other adults or older children, be aware of whether or not younger children are listening.

School Counselor Contact Information

Columbia City Elementary:
Jennifer Vanderschuere 971-266-3307
jenniferv@sthelens.k12.or.us

Lewis and Clark Elementary:
Jill Griffin 503-366-7624
jillg@sthelens.k12.or.us

McBride Elementary:
Kerry Marshall 503-395-4882
kerrym@sthelens.k12.or.us



CCMH 24/7 Crisis Support for Columbia County
- 503-782-4499
- https://www.ccmh1.com/crisis-intervention/

Columbia Community Mental Health
- Phone 503-397-5211
- Website https://www.ccmh1.com/
- Address 58646 McNulty Way, St. Helens

Domestic Violence Support: SAFE of Columbia County
Phone 503-397-6161 or 866-397-6161
Website https://safeofcolumbiacounty.org/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Phone 1-800-273-TALK En español: 1-888-628-9454
Website https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

Child Abuse Hotline 877-302-0077

Elder Abuse Hotline 503-438-2195