

**Parenting in a Pandemic: Embracing Transitions in
Partnership with Your Children**

By Drs. Lisa Snow and Kristin Valerius

The Power of Embrace

- After a year that has stripped away so many ways we connect with others, there is incredible power when we as parents embrace our children through physical touch, by identifying their needs, and by letting them know they are doing a good job.
- Parents also have power to join with their children in embracing the changes that are coming yet again. Going back to school is a significant stressor that requires rebalancing yet again.



WHAT IS A CHANGE OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME THAT IS DIFFICULT TO EMBRACE RIGHT NOW (FOR YOU OR YOUR CHILD)?

WHAT ARE WAYS THAT YOU “EMBRACE” OR CONNECT IN YOUR FAMILY (THINK BEYOND JUST HUGGING)?

The New Normal, Waves, Acceptance, and Recognizing Loss

- We are all weathering the same storm, though we are all in different types of boats (i.e., access to resources).
- Many waves of change occurred this year.
- Side effects or changes in behavior/mood are expected and normal under these circumstances.
- Part of COPING with change or trauma is taking space to talk about the stress it's causing the losses you feel.
- Often our children show symptoms that help them meet a need under the circumstances. You are not alone if you or someone in your family is having increases in anxiety, irritability, sadness or withdrawal, or difficulty enjoying things. Many of those “symptoms” are perfectly normal under the circumstances.





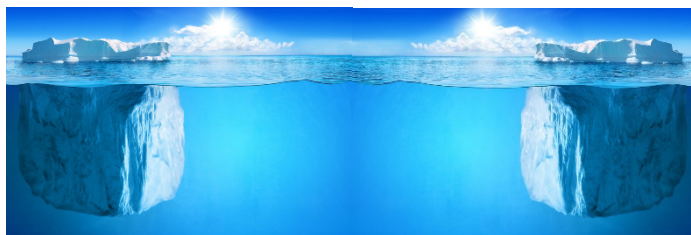
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LOSSES OR THINGS THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT, IF NOT FOR COVID? HOW AND WHERE DO YOU AND YOUR CHILD SHARE THAT GRIEF?

WHAT NEW CIRCUMSTANCE MIGHT YOUR CHILD NEED HELP “EMBRACING” OR ACCEPTING? HOW CAN YOU MODEL FOR THEM THIS ACCEPTANCE.

ARE THERE SOME BEHAVIORS/CHANGES IN YOUR HOME THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT? IS THERE SOMEONE THAT COULD HELP YOU WITH A PLAN FOR THOSE CONCERNS? (School, family friends?)

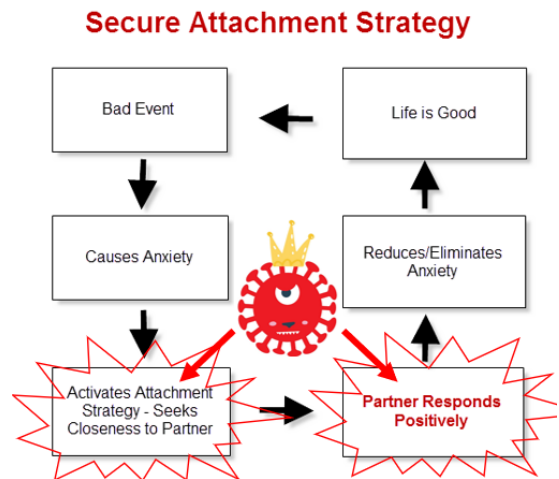
Our Biologic Protection: “Need-Icebergs”, Attachment, “Secure-Base Scripts”

- Like an iceberg, often the behavior we see at the surface is just part of the equation. Underneath our actions are deeper feelings, needs, and concerns. We want our parenting to respond to the deeper issues and not just the “surface”. We also want to understand how we are being triggered with regards to our kid’s behavior. We all want to be good parents and to help our kids be happy and COVID has made that difficult for all of us—which sometimes causes our responses to be even more stressed.
- Deep in our wiring parents and children are programmed to use the closest relationships around them to relieve threat and create security.
- This drive automatically kicks for our children (and for us!) when they feel stress. They will signal their stress in some way, we respond, often they feel better, and balance is restored. This happens over and over and creates what we call **Secure Base Scripts (SBS)**.
- As children get older, we can outsource attachment and building SBS to many other places (coaches, teachers, friends, pastors, relatives, bosses, etc).
- COVID has presented problems that are NEW and often UNSOLVABLE, making it difficult to “make things better.”
- In addition, COVID has removed so many sources to build this security and attachment,



leaving it all on the home setting...which is impossible.

- As a result, our kids signal to us in ways that are confusing, upsetting, or worrisome. We are already overwhelmed with depleted resources. Then we get further triggered by our fear for their well-being...which makes our responses sometimes less than ideal. This process is NORMAL!!!!
- But with a little attention we can notice some of the stuff under the surface so that we can be better attuned to how we can both get our needs met and feel secure in the storm. The attention can focus on:
 - The times when things go well...when we help our kids better and feel relieved about our connection with them. Then BUILD on that more often!
 - The deeper needs and fears of our children
 - Underlying worries for our kids that sometimes trigger when we don't realize it
 - How to repair "misses" in our communication by acknowledging our feelings and struggles



THINK BACK TO SOME RECENT MEMORIES WHEN YOU AND YOUR CHILD HAVE BEEN IN SYNC AND THINGS HAVE GONE WELL. WHAT DID YOU DO OR SAY THAT HELPED IT WORK? WHAT DID YOUR CHILD DO WELL THAT HELPED YOU CONNECT?

WHEN THINGS HAVEN'T GONE WELL WHAT HAVE YOU DONE OR COULD DO TO REPAIR? THIS CAN HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL THE SECURITY OF THEIR CONNECTION TO YOU AND SUPPORT IN HELPING THEM FACE THE WORLD?



These overarching concepts are sometimes difficult to put into practice in the day to day. LOSC hosted age specific breakout groups to talk about how to build attachment and create security and resilience in both Primary and Secondary age children. For more information, talk to your school's counselor!

In addition, Sundstrom Clinical Services will be offering several follow up services to go deeper on some of these areas:

Parenting in a Pandemic Group	Kristin Valerius, PhD
April: 4 th - week virtual	
Gottman Couples Workshop	Keith Valerius, LPC
April 10 th : virtual or in-Person	
Social Skills Group (Ages 7-9)	Lisa Snow, PsyD
May: 4th- week virtual and in-person	
Teen Coping Skills Group	Meg Boden-Alvey, PsyD
Late Spring/Summer	
Step-Parents Group	Joyce Cha, PsyD
Early Fall	

To get on our MAILING LIST and receive information about these and other upcoming events send us an email!

(Note: The mailing list is NOT intended for inquiries about starting individual therapy)

Send an email to: KSValerius@sundstromclinic.com

Name

Phone Number

Class or workshop of interest

For inquiries about individual or family therapy call our office to be placed on a waiting list.