

Dear Parents and Families,

Yes, kids are missing out on so much right now. But they're also learning some pretty big life lessons during these uncertain times. The following article was written by Catherine Pearson and published in The Huffington Post:

4 Life Skills Parents Can Teach Kids Amid The Coronavirus Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, millions have lost their jobs and millions of children are out of school. Parents, teachers and therapists have deep concerns about the toll this could have on children of all ages now and down the road. It's hard to see any bright spots.

But here's one: Mental health experts say our kids could come out of this crisis with some pretty powerful life skills and tools for getting through hard stuff. That's not to sugarcoat how tragic this has been and will be for many families. But it is a reminder of the kind of learning that can come through pain and adversity.

"It's a terrible time that we are in," psychologist Ron Stolberg, a professor at Alliant International University and author of "Teaching Kids to Think," told HuffPost. "But it's also an opportunity for kids to learn they have tremendous capacity to overcome adversity."

Here are four powerful life skills kids could take away from the coronavirus pandemic, and some pretty quick and simple strategies to help them get there.

Lesson #1: How to live with uncertainty.

In a matter of months, kids' worlds have been totally upended by COVID-19.

They don't go to school or daycare, they don't see friends, and in many cases, they can't even really go outside. None of the grown-ups in their lives can give them any answers about how or when this will all end, because everything is uncertain.

But learning to live with discomfort and uncertainty is part of becoming a "developmentally healthy" adult, said Nicholas Westers, a pediatric psychologist with Children's Health and an associate professor at UT Southwestern, told HuffPost.

How you can help: Rather than trying to give your kiddo a clear answer about what comes next, be honest about the fact that there is a lot we do not know. If you have a toddler or preschool-age kid at home, explain that doctors are working to find medicine that will help us all be healthy and could allow life to go back to normal, Stolberg said.

With older kids, you can be more candid. Ask them about what they think is happening in the world right now, then tell them what you know — and what you don't. Promise you will continue talking about what comes next as things continue to change and progress.

Lesson #2: How to be resilient.

While there's plenty of anecdotal evidence that some kids are struggling right now — and that absolutely should not be dismissed — experts say that children are remarkably resilient. This is a great time for parents to help kids tap into that, and to appreciate their own abilities to bounce back.

"I think it's important to say that most children are going to be OK," said Westers. "Children and teenagers are resilient."

How you can help: "Allow room for their discomfort," Westers urged. One way of doing that is simply to acknowledge (in an age-appropriate way, of course) that you are also feeling stress or fear. Then "model coping," he said. Do you walk? Practice deep breathing? Talk to friends? Invite them to join you. Bonus: You'll force yourself to actually do a bit of self-care.



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Reinforcing your kiddos' problem-solving skills can also help foster resiliency.

"When there is a dilemma or a question, instead of answering it, it's a great time to ask our kids to tell us what they're thinking," Stolberg said. "It may be the first time in a long time that we've had the time to sit down and really observe our children's thinking processes and problem-solving skills."

If your kid tells you they're sad or lonely, perhaps ask what they think a good coping strategy is, rather than immediately jumping in with a suggestion. Give them a chance to think on their own, Stolberg said, and to use you as a sounding board.

Lesson #3: That they are so much more than school and extracurriculars.

"One of the really fun things I'm seeing with older kids is that many of them have had ideas of things they wanted to learn or do that they've never really had the time for," Stolberg said. "Our teenagers are over-scheduled. They don't have downtime or playtime anymore. Now they have plenty of it." In the past few weeks, he has heard stories of tweens and teens who have taken up the guitar, or who have tried cooking for the first time.

It's not about self-improvement. It's about making sure your kid recognizes they have time and space to reconnect with who they are outside of school and their usual routines.

How you can help: Talk with your kid about what they'd like to be doing more of, then be prepared to get into their chosen hobbies with them — even if that means playing Fortnite, Westers said. If they don't necessarily have a ton of ideas about what they'd like to do, think about some simple things you can do together, like playing a board game or making a meal together.

Then tell them how happy you are to have that time together, and how much you value your connection with them.

Lesson #4: How important their role is in your family.

When everyone is busy rushing out the door to work or school, your kid may lose sight of their own role in the household. Now is a good time to make it clear that your family — whatever shape it might take — is a team, and they are an essential part of it.

"You're teaching them that they're partly responsible for the family getting through this," Stolberg said.

How you can help: If you've got little ones at home, ask them to help you sweeping, or cleaning up toys, or other simple chores. You might have to redo it, but you're setting a precedent. They are a part of the team.

If you've got older kids, now is a good time to give them more responsibility around the house than you might otherwise. Let them set their own alarm clocks. Give them chances to make their own meals. Make sure they're taking out the trash or cleaning up around the house. Give them important roles at home.

"Reinforce how helpful they are and important they are to the family," Stolberg said.

It is OKAY to grieve the loss of time spent with family and friends, vacations, sports, graduations, First Communion and everything on your calendar that has been suddenly erased. However, it is also beneficial to think about how we can continue to learn and grow through this experience.

Sincerely,
Your School Social Workers and School Counselors
School Social Work Program
Catholic Charities Indianapolis

WEEKLY TIP FOR PARENTS:

Dear Parents,

Don't stress about schoolwork. In September, I will get your children back on track. I am a teacher and that's my superpower. What I can't fix is social-emotional trauma that prevents the brain from learning. So right now, I just need you to share your calm, share your strength, and share your laughter with your children. No kids are ahead. No kids are behind. Your children are exactly where they need to be.

With love,
All the teachers on planet Earth

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

Community Compass is a free, quick and easy app designed to show people where they can find food assistance in Marion County. With a smart phone, you can find free meal locations and free grocery locations near you. If you do not have a smart phone, you can text the word "hi" to 317-434-3758.

Indianapolis Public Schools webpage offers up-to-date information on local food and other community resources

<https://myips.org/blog/district/community-partners-continue-to-provide-resources-to-families-los-socios-comunitarios-continuan-brindando-recursos-a-las-familias/>

The City of Indianapolis website has a list of community resources and supports aimed at helping those that are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.indy.gov/topic/covid>

2-1-1 is a free and confidential service that helps Hoosiers across Indiana find the local resources they need. Dial 2-1-1 for 24-hours a day, 7 days a week support.

Catholic Charities Crisis Office 317-236-1512

St. Vincent de Paul Help Line 317-687-0169

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:

National Crisis Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Crisis line via online chat at: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/> or by text: Send the word HOME to 741741

Community Health Network: 317-621-5700

Provides immediate assessments by phone for persons experiencing a mental health crisis 24 hours daily and offers referrals and scheduling for mental health and addiction treatment providers.

Sandra Eskenazi Mental Health Center: 317-880-8485

Provides 24-hour telephone crisis interventions for persons with mental health or addiction treatment emergencies.

Aspire Indiana Crisis Line: 1-800-560-4038

Provides 24 hour phone crisis interventions for persons experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis.

Adult and Child Mental Health Center: 1-877-882-5122

Provides a 24-hour crisis and referral phone line.

Families First: 317-251-7575

24-hour crisis and suicide intervention services by both phone and text messaging.

Indiana Coalition against Domestic Violence: 1-800-332-7385

Offers 24-hour crisis intervention, safety planning and shelter referrals for persons in domestic violence situations.

HAPPY, HEALTHY KIDS AT HOME:

How to stay organized during Distance Learning:

1. Create a Workspace

- Find a space free of distractions
- Eliminate additional distractions such as the television or phone

2. Time Management

- Make a schedule
- Plan ahead and prioritize

3. Take Breaks

- Decide what you want to do to give your mind a break
- Use a timer to schedule breaks

4. Use your Resources

- Stay connected with peers, teachers and school counselor
- Be sure to check your email and your assignments daily



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7N1950Yv8&app=desktop>