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# SMFCSD School Psychology

## May 2020 Newsletter

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*This monthly newsletter is brought to you by the SMFCSD School Psychologists  
and Educationally-Related Mental Health Clinicians*

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The COVID-19 pandemic and school closures have forced us all to make significant adjustments to our normal lives. To support families during this challenging time, we have opened an “advice line” at [Ask the SMFCSD School Psychologist](#). We welcome questions about child development, mental health, and educational or behavioral challenges, such as:

1. "My child has a learning disability and is not engaged with online learning. What are some things I can do to motivate her to complete school work?"
2. "Bedtime is a huge struggle, full of crying, hitting, and kicking. What should I do?"

Consider submitting a question today! Selected questions will be answered by a panel of 1-3 practitioners on a video-recording posted on our website. We hope the range of perspectives will be of value and support to you.

Check out the first [video](#) on managing bedtime routines!



*Some quick tips to promote your child's social-emotional learning  
and well-being during distance learning*

### Mental Health Activity #1:

#### Flower and Candle Breathing

(Submitted by Deborah Wolk,  
Foster City/Brewer Island School Psychologist)

*A strategy for encouraging young children to take slow, deep, and calming breaths is to use props: a flower and unlit candle. Add a scent to a fake flower if desired.*

- Hold up the flower and encourage the child to smell it deeply.

### Mental Health Activity #2:

#### Feelings Scavenger Hunt

(Submitted by Connie Chan,  
LEAD/Highlands School Psychologist)

*Find something that...*

- Makes you feel happy
- Makes you or others laugh
- Helps you feel connected to a friend or loved one

- Hold up an unlit candle, and ask the child to blow it out. If they blow out too quickly or suddenly, encourage them to imagine a birthday cake full of candles, and ask them to blow them all out.
- Remind your child to “smell the flower and blow out the candle” when they need a calming moment.

- Makes you feel grateful
- Helps you feel calm
- Makes you feel creative
- Reminds you of a time when you were flexible

### Mental Health Activity #3: Steps Toward Dealing with Worry

(Submitted by Anka Gleber, Borel/Bilingual School Psychologist)

Worry is what happens when your mind dwells on negative thoughts, uncertain outcomes, or things that (could) go wrong. It can express itself as repetitive, obsessive thoughts. While worry actually has positive functions--allowing our brains to think/rethink, problem-solve, brainstorm solutions, and take action--it's only when we get stuck thinking about a problem that worry stops being functional. Some small steps to challenge this:

- Set a “worry budget”: Give yourself a specific amount of time in which you allow yourself to worry about a problem. When that time is up, consciously redirect your thoughts.
- When you notice worry becoming all-encompassing: Redirect yourself, by consciously engaging in another pre-set, concrete activity (cooking, cleaning, jogging, etc.).
- Write it down: Research has shown that just 8-10 minutes of writing can help calm obsessive thoughts.

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