

Developing Resilience – Learning to be Flexible

Statement for Parents about SEL during this time:

“We all have problems. The way we solve them is what makes us different.” ~Unknown

Flexibility of the body keeps your body moving properly and helps prevent injury. Flexibility of the mind works similarly. Those with high levels of flexible thinking are said to use lots of humor and have a more positive outlook on life. In the recent weeks I’m sure every person has experienced situations where things haven’t gone their way. When this only happens once or twice most people bounce back pretty quickly and can show pretty good flexible thinking, however, when it happens over and over again our ability to be flexible can start to diminish.

There was a young man who had a scholarship to play basketball before a car accident left him paralyzed from the waist down. He said, “It didn’t ruin my life, it just changed my circumstances. I’m happy to be here, with so many opportunities in front of me.”

Life isn’t always easy and doesn’t always go as we plan. When this happens we must be willing to let go of the life we had planned in order to make the best of the life that’s waiting for us.

“Experiences don’t stop. That’s life. And the very experiences that seem so hard when you’re going through them are the ones you’ll look back on with gratitude for how far you’ve come.”

~ Marc Chernoff

Author of 1000+ Little Things Happy Successful People Do Differently

Integrating the theme into the Home:

High Emotions –

Heightened emotion and rational thinking cannot exist in the brain at the same time.

This means that it is very difficult to show flexible thinking when our emotions are high.

First pick a calming activity before searching for solutions to your problem.

Younger children -

[Sesame Street: Learn to Belly Breathe with Rosita](#)

[Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat - "Belly Breathe" with Elmo](#)

[DANIEL TIGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD | What Do You Do with the Mad that You Feel? Song | PBS KIDS](#)

Get outdoors

Taking a break

Older children -

Yoga

Mindfulness

Go for a walk

Exercise

Deep breathing

Take a break

Listen to calming music

Journaling –

Building flexible thinking over time involves stretching our brains over time. It is the same as stretching our bodies. We can't expect to be super flexible the first time we stretch, but over time little by little we will improve our flexibility.

“Journaling is one of the most underused, yet incredibly effective tools available to the masses.”
~ Marc Chernoff

For younger children

Use the adapted prompts as talking points for family discussion.

Older children and parents -

Challenge yourself to read and write on each prompt adapted from Marc Chernoff's blog for at least five minutes every day or on a schedule that works for you. See how doing so gradually changes how you think, feel and behave.

If you miss a day, don't worry, pick up where you left off.

Prompt 1

The goal is not to get rid of all your negative thoughts, feelings, and present life circumstances. Doing so is impossible. The goal is to change your response to them.

What's something specific about your present circumstances that's been stressing you out? What can you do to improve your response today?

Younger children –

What is something that has been making you mad or sad recently? What can you do to make yourself happy again?

Prompt 2

The most powerful moments in life often come when you find the courage to let go of what can't be changed. Because when you are no longer able to change a situation, you are challenged to change yourself—to grow beyond the unchangeable. And that changes everything.

What's one unchangeable reality you've been resisting? What can you do right now to ease your mind into the acceptance of this reality?

Younger children –

What is one change that has been tough for you? We might not be able to change it right now, but we can change how we think about it. Say "I might not be able to do _____, but I can do _____."

Prompt 3

Love what you do, until you can do what you love. Love where you are, until you can be where you love. Love the people you are with, until you can be with the rest of the people you love. This is the way we find happiness, opportunity, and peace.

What do you love about your present life situation (despite the challenges that exist)? Who do you love today (despite the quirks they have)?

Younger children –

What is something you really like about how things are right now? Who is someone you love?

Prompt 4

Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no chaos, trouble, or hard realities to deal with. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still remain mentally, emotionally, and physically centered.

What's something small that always brings you peace when you think about it? Why?

Younger children –

What is something that small that always makes you happy and helps you feel calm when you think about it? Why?

Prompt 5

Too often we say “life is not fair” while we’re eating our food, sipping a drink, and reading the news on our smartphones. Think twice and be thankful. Right now, before you think of anything else, breathe deeply, appreciate where you are, and see the value in what you have.

What's one privilege (or good thing) you have right now that you are taking for granted?

Younger children –

What is something good that you have right now? What is one way that you can be more thankful for it?

Prompt 6

Happiness is letting go of what you assume your life is supposed to be like right now and sincerely appreciating it for everything that it is. At the end of this day, before you close your eyes, smile and be at peace with where you've been and grateful for what you have. Life isn't easy right now, but there is some good.

What do you appreciate most about your present life situation? Why?

Younger children –

What are you most thankful for today? Why?

Prompt 7

Everything gets a bit uncomfortable when it's time to grow. That's just a part of the growth process. Things will get better. Be patient and remind yourself: Life never gets easier, you just get stronger.

How has the discomfort you've felt in the past helped you grow? How can you better accept the discomfort you presently feel?

Younger children –

What have you done in the past to get through tough situations? Can you use any of those strategies to help you right now?

Prompt 8

Forgive yourself for the bad decisions you made, for the times you lacked understanding, for the choices that hurt others and yourself. Forgive yourself, for being young and reckless. These are all vital lessons. And what matters most right now is your willingness to grow from them.

What specifically do you need to forgive yourself for? What have your error(s) in judgment taught you?

Younger children –

Is there something that you keep doing over and over again even though it upsets someone else? Do you feel better or worse after? If you feel worse after then it is probably not a good thing to keep doing. What is something else you can do in that situation?

Prompt 9

Inner peace begins the moment you take a deep breath and choose not to allow an external event to control your inner peace. You are not what happened to you. You are what you choose to become in this moment. Let go, breathe, and begin again.

What ideals are you holding on to that are holding you down? What can you let go of right now (without losing a thing)?

Younger children –

What is something that is making you upset right now? Can you change it? If you can't change it, how can you make yourself feel better each time you think about it?

Prompt 10

We waste our time waiting for ideal paths to appear. But they never do. Because we forget that paths are made by walking, not waiting.

What's one small step you've been thinking about taking, for far too long?

Younger children –

What is something new you have been wanting to learn? Is there a way you can start learning now?

Prompt 11

It's funny how we outgrow what we once thought we couldn't live without, and then we fall in love with what we didn't even know we wanted. Life keeps leading us on journeys we would never go on if it were up to us. Don't be afraid. Have faith. Find the lessons. Trust the journey.

What's something you've moved on from that once meant the world to you? And, what's something you love today that you never even knew you needed in your life?

Younger children –

What is something that you really liked before, but haven't really missed during this time? What is something new you have been doing that you really love?

Prompt 12

Even when it seems personal, rarely do people do things because of you, they do things because of them. And while you may not be able to control all the things people say and do to you, you can decide not to be reduced by them today.

What's something you often take too personally even though, logically, you know better?

Younger children –

Is there something that has been really bothering you lately that never bothered you before?

Prompt 13

Don't lower your standards, but do remember that removing your expectations of others is the best way to avoid being disappointed by them. You will end up sadly disappointed if you expect people will always do for you as you do for them. Not everyone has the same heart as you.

How have your expectations of others gotten the best of you recently? How will you remind yourself to ease your expectations today?

Younger children –

Is there someone that has disappointed you recently? How can you forgive them for the disappointment?

Prompt 14

Everybody you know is afraid of something, loves something, and has lost something. Know this. Respect this. And be extra kind in these hard times. Take some extra time to really listen. Take some extra time to learn something new. Take some extra time to say thank you, today.

What can you easily do to be a little kinder than usual today? And, who was the last person who was unexpectedly kind to you?

Younger children –

What is something kind you can do for someone else today? Has anyone surprised you with their kindness?

Prompt 15

You won't always be a priority to others, and that's why you need to be a priority to yourself right now. Practice respecting yourself, taking care of yourself, and becoming your own support system in these unprecedented times. Your needs matter. Start meeting them. Don't wait on others to choose you. Choose yourself!

How will you choose yourself today?

Younger children –

What is one activity you can do to make yourself happy today?

Prompt 16

In the grand scheme of things, a relatively small part of your life is decided by uncontrollable circumstances (like COVID-19), while the vast majority of it is decided by your perspective regarding these circumstances. Let this sink in. Regardless of what's going on around you, peace of mind arrives the moment you come to peace with what's on your mind.

What is one specific part of your present reality you need to come to peace with? Why?

Younger children –

What is something that is happening right now that makes you mad? Is being mad fixing the situation? What is something you can do to help you deal with it?

Reminders for older children -

Stop resisting. Breathe. Be where you are. You're where you're supposed to be at this moment. There's a time and place for everything, and every step is necessary.

Just keep doing your best, and don't force what's not yet supposed to fit into your life. When it's meant to be, it will be.

Give yourself the space to hear your own voice—your own soul. Too many of us listen to the noise of the world and get lost in it. Stand strong! Live by choice, not by chance. Choose to listen to your own inner wisdom today.

Don't fall back into your old patterns of living just because they're more comfortable and easier to access right now. Remember, you've left certain habits and situations behind for a reason: to improve your life. And right now, you can't move forward if you keep going back.

There may come a time when you feel as if everything is messed up and broken. That's the starting line. Be humble. Be teachable. The world is always bigger than your view of the world. And there's always room for a new possibility, a new step, and a new beginning.

Resources (Please note what grade level or grade specific - books, articles, videos etc.)

(PK-1st) [Taking Sides | ARTHUR](#) (video)

(PK-1st) [Good Things Come to Those Who Wait | Sesame Street](#) (video)

(PK-1st) [Zac Efron: Patience | Sesame Street](#) (video)

(PK-1st) [Not Yet | Sesame Street](#) (video)

(PK-1st) [Relax | Sesame Street](#) (video)

(PK-1st) [I Tried \(Try Again\) | Sesame Street](#) (video)

(PK-1st) [Abby and Elmo: Just Jump | Sesame Street](#) (video)

(PK-4th) [I JUST DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF NO! By Julia Cook \(CHILDREN'S BOOKS READ ALOUD\)](#)

(PK-4th) [Lousy Rotten Stinkin Grapes Fable \(Read Aloud\)](#)

(PK-4th) [When Pencil Met Eraser | Read Aloud Story Time](#)

(PK-4th) [Not a Box](#)

(PK-5th) [Yoga for Kids | Breathe with Me](#)

(PK-5th) [Fireflies Musical Yoga for Kids](#)

(3rd-6th) [FLEXIBLE THINKING ACTIVITY](#)

(5th-6th) [7 Tips for Building Flexible Thinking](#)

(5th-12th) [Penny & Sheldon working out Puzzle 1 \(The Jigsaw Video\)](#)

(8th-12th) [13 Helping Points When Things Don't Go Your Way](#)

(8th-12th) [Building Students' Cognitive Flexibility](#)

Articles for Parents –

[When Things Don't Go Your Way, Something Better Always Comes Along](#)

[18 Reminders You Need When Things Don't Go Your Way](#)

Additional Technology Apps/Resources



Sleep, meditation, and relaxation are in your hands with Calm, another popular mindfulness app. These guided meditations are perfect for complete novices through seasoned practitioners, and you have your pick when it comes to how long you can dedicate to the app each day. In addition to an assortment of daily meditations, Calm features nature sounds and sleep stories.



Smiling Mind: Meditation for all ages

[Smiling Mind](#) is a nonprofit organization that's attempting to make the positive experience of mindfulness meditation available for everybody.

Because the organization was founded by and is currently operated by psychologists and educators, everything they do is backed by scientific evidence, so you can make sure your new habits and affirmations are guiding you in the right direction.

In the app, you'll find a selection of different guided meditation options, which can help you eliminate your negative thoughts and focus on the positivity of the present moments. There are different programs for different age groups including children as young as 7 years old to adults, and programs for specific applications, such as meditation for sports, education, and the workplace.

You can also track your progress since the app records how long your sessions are and when you've participated in those sessions. The app is free to use but you can make a donation if you want to continue supporting their efforts. The app is available for [Apple](#) and [Android](#) devices.



What's Up? uses techniques from both Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Acceptance Commitment Therapy to help users cope with issues like anxiety, depression, and anger. The app offers a diary feature with a scale for rating your emotions, a "catastrophe scale" to help you put problems in perspective, breathing techniques, and an interactive question game to keep you feeling grounded during stressful moments.



Breathe2Relax is a portable stress management tool which provides detailed information on the effects of stress on the body and instructions and practice exercises to help users learn the stress management skill called diaphragmatic breathing.



Stop, Breathe, and Think is your daily mindfulness app that also prompts you to input how you're feeling. Select your mood when you open the app and it will suggest the meditations, yoga sequences, or acupressure that could serve you best in that moment, from deep breathing exercises to body scans to visualizations. The check-in feature also allows you to track your moods and progress, so you can examine what you feel most and focus on taming or understanding those anxieties better.