

Family Life in the Age of COVID-19



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Overview

- Age guide to development & reactions
- Family resilience framework
- Boundaries, limits, squabbles
- Communication
- Parenting strategies
- Resources
- ***You are the expert***

Kindergarten

Development

- Becoming independent
- Thrive on routine and structure
- Acquire lots of new skills

Reactions

- Regressed behavior and skills e.g dressing, learning
- Tantrums, fears
- Little events are huge and time is difficult to understand

Elementary School

Development

- Explosion of learning
- Expansion of friendship and social experiences
- Group experiences become important e.g. teams, extracurricular

Reactions

- Meltdowns, irritability
- Avoid, worried, but also unable to verbalize accurately

Middle School

Development

- Specific interests; academic, creative, extracurricular
- Work on and work out social issues
- Gain independence, less supervised

Reactions

- Irritable
- Catastrophize
- Depression, anxiety

High School

Development

- Leadership
- Try out, learn roles, intimacy, life paths
- Planning post HS
- Independence, push/pull of attachment
- Identity
- Social footing

Reactions

- Defiance
- Isolation
- Need/want space
- Past challenges worse

Parents

- Juggling roles
- Sandwich generation
- Loss of independence
- Pressure from comparison
- Conflicting recommendations
- Unknown end

Grandparents

- Wanting to be independent
- Conflicts when “children” are caregivers
- Denial vs. abundance of risks
- Isolation from friends, lack purpose, family

Family Resilience

Ability to maintain or resume effective functioning, adapt and care for members after adversity, trauma, significant stress

➤ Beliefs & attitudes

- Crisis is shared challenge
- Accept distress is understandable
- Have realistic hope
- Avoid blame, shame, guilt
- Connect to positive beliefs, social, community values
- Find positive meaning

Family Resilience

- Share information
 - Age appropriate
- Preserve routines, rituals, roles with flexibility
 - Schedules, new and temporary
 - Adapt, create new
 - Change responsibility
- Problem solve
 - Identify internal and external resources



Parent, child, sibling squabbles: why

- Everyone: fatigue, less motivated, unknown, stress, frustration, loss, upset routines = expressed as anger
- Close quarters: limits to outlets for energy
- Parental overload: want more/compete for attention
- Parent as fixer: boredom, distress
- Under surveillance: prevention vs. punishment
- History: prior strengths & squabbles

Boundaries, limits, squabbles: what to do

- Realistic expectations: for right now, for adults and kids
- Basic non-negotiable items: behavior and safety
e.g no hitting
- Pick: your battles, your absolutes
- Follow through
- One-on-one time: all about that one
- Rewards (are not bribes): kids help define behavior & goals
- Empathy: “*this*” is hard, apologize, forgive

Boundaries, limits, squabbles: what to do

- Designate no fly zone: time, items/toys, place off limits to increase personal boundaries
- Who started, side, solves: shared responsibility and solutions
- Negotiate and compete to win
- Outlets: indoor/safe outdoor, play, art ways to let off steam, express
- Take turns: everyone gets a say, a turn and all go along
- Jars: for ideas, self sufficiency
- Games: e.g. Family Dinner card game

https://www.betweenessions.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Family_Dinner_Game__LS0420.pdf

Communication and plans

Talking with Children about Coronavirus



BE CALM



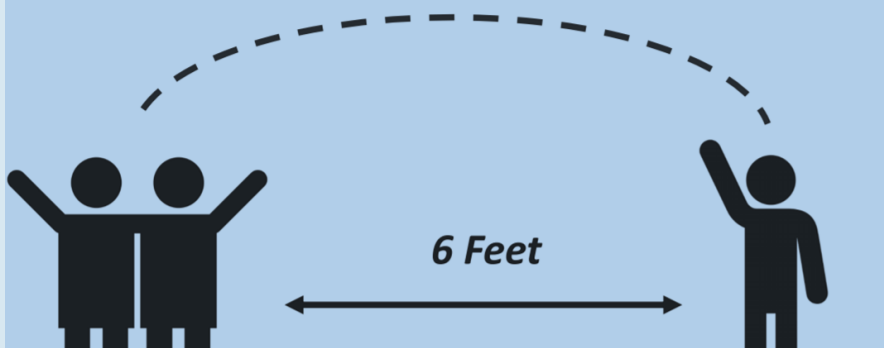
BE CLEAR



BE WITH

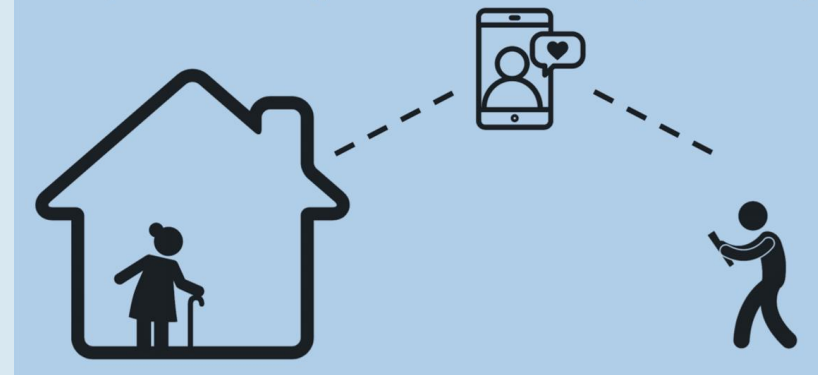
Physical Distancing

Socially Connecting



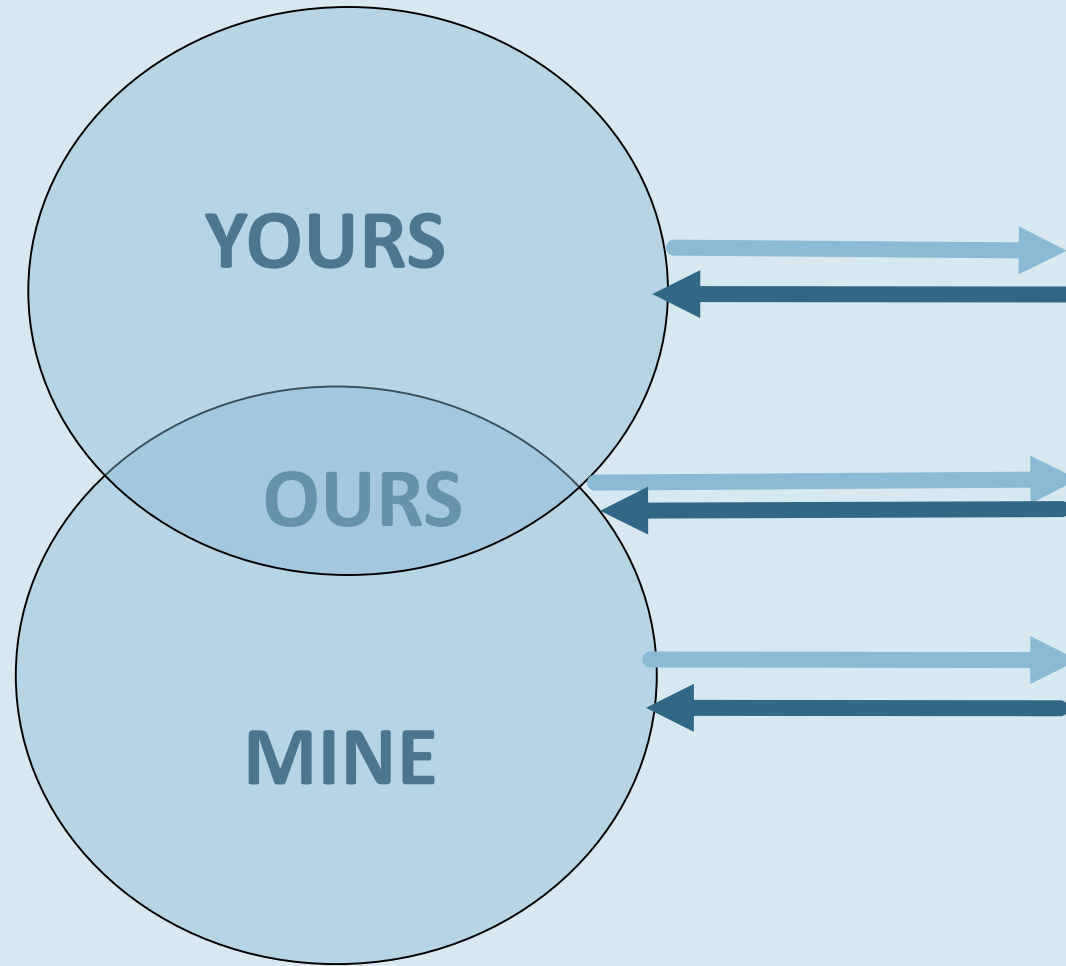
Physical Distancing

Socially Connecting



Cstsonline.org

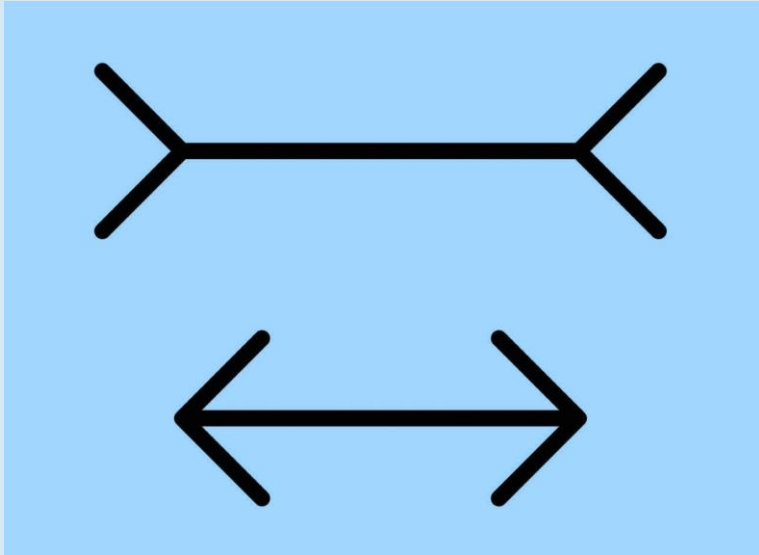
Communication and plans



Strategies: decision box

UPSIDE OF CHOICE or ACTION A	UPSIDE OF CHOICE or ACTION B
DOWNSIDE OF CHOICE or ACTION A	DOWNSIDE OF CHOICE or ACTION B

Strategies: thinking and feeling

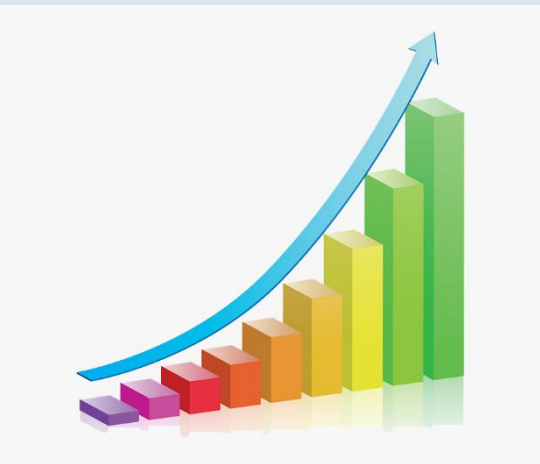


- Our mind plays tricks on us
- Perception matters
- Real vs reality
- All or nothing thinking
- Catastrophizing
- A feeling is just a feeling and can be changed
- A thought is just a thought and can be changed

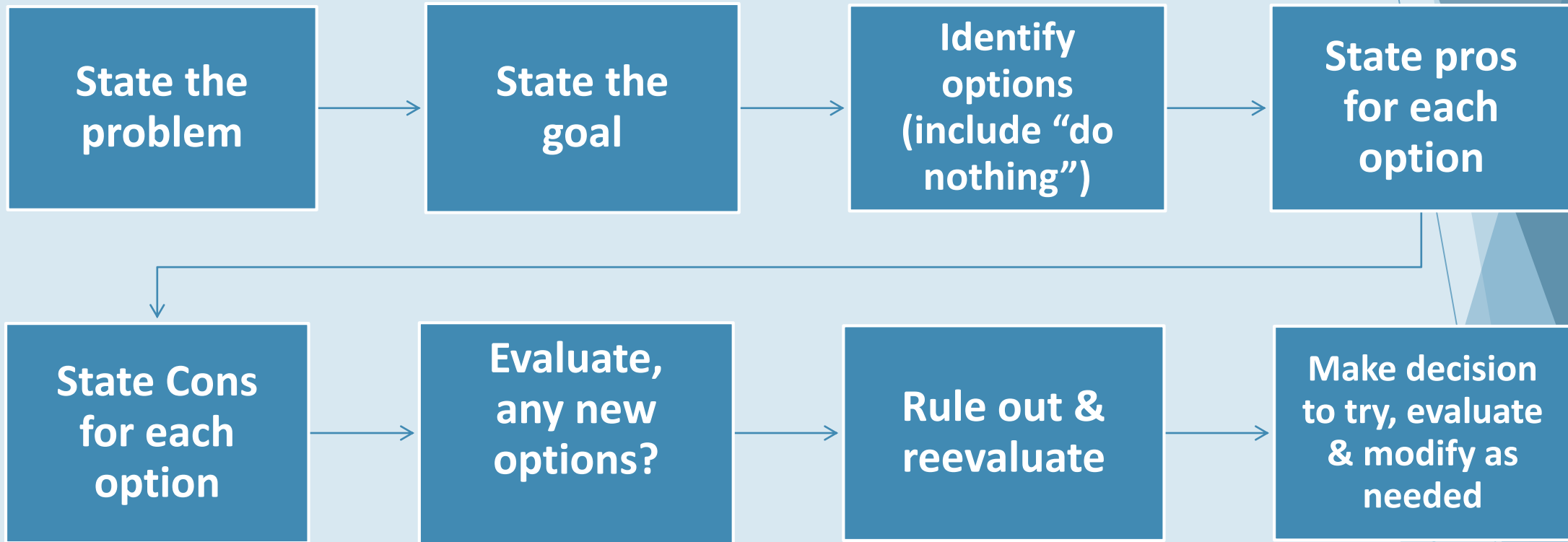
Strategies: burst vs dose



- Age and style appropriate
- Task/activity goal
- Allow more freedom
- Decrease oversight
- Increase responsibility with reward

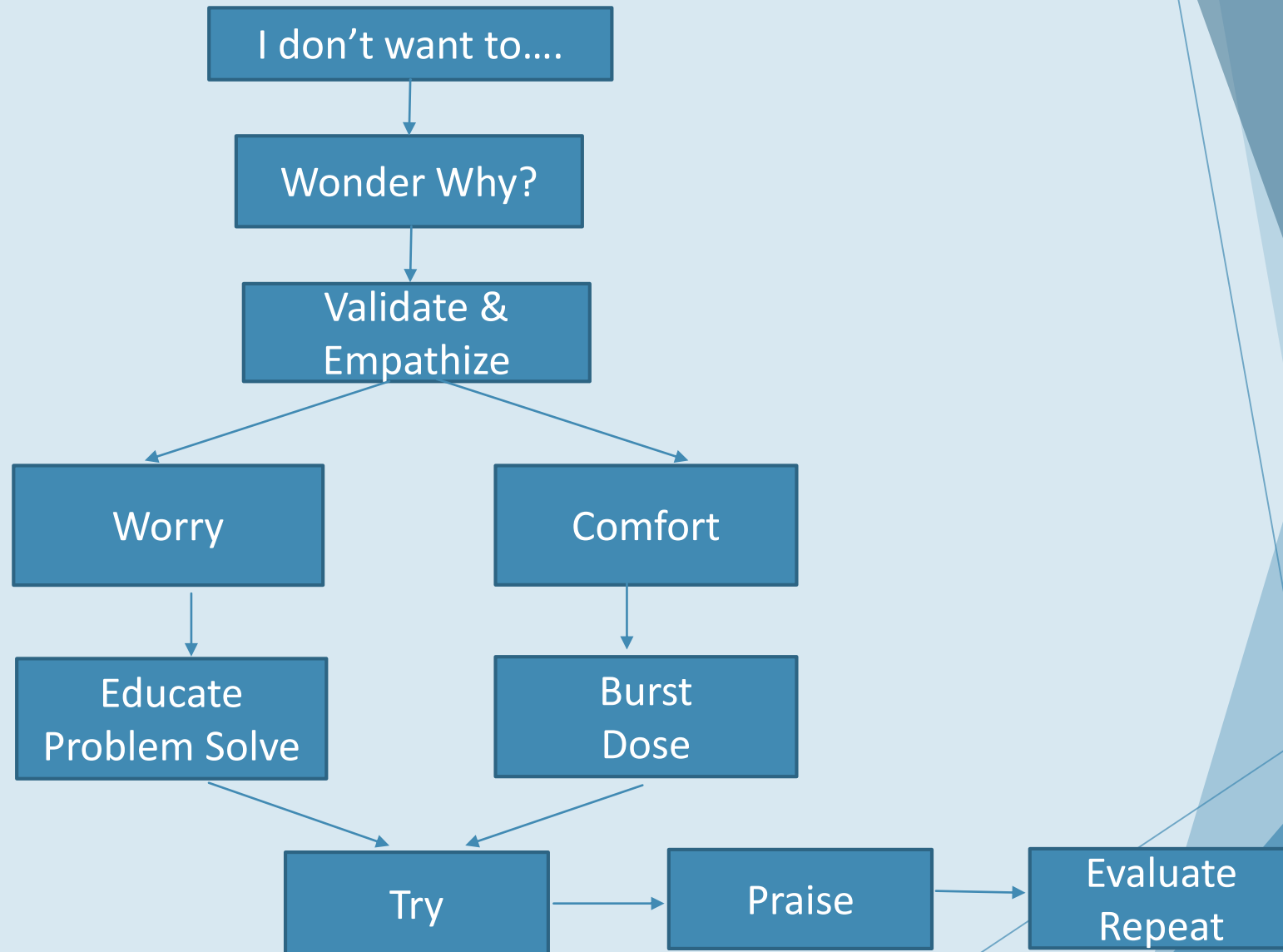


Strategies: problem solving



Sachs and Albano, 2020

Strategies: putting it together



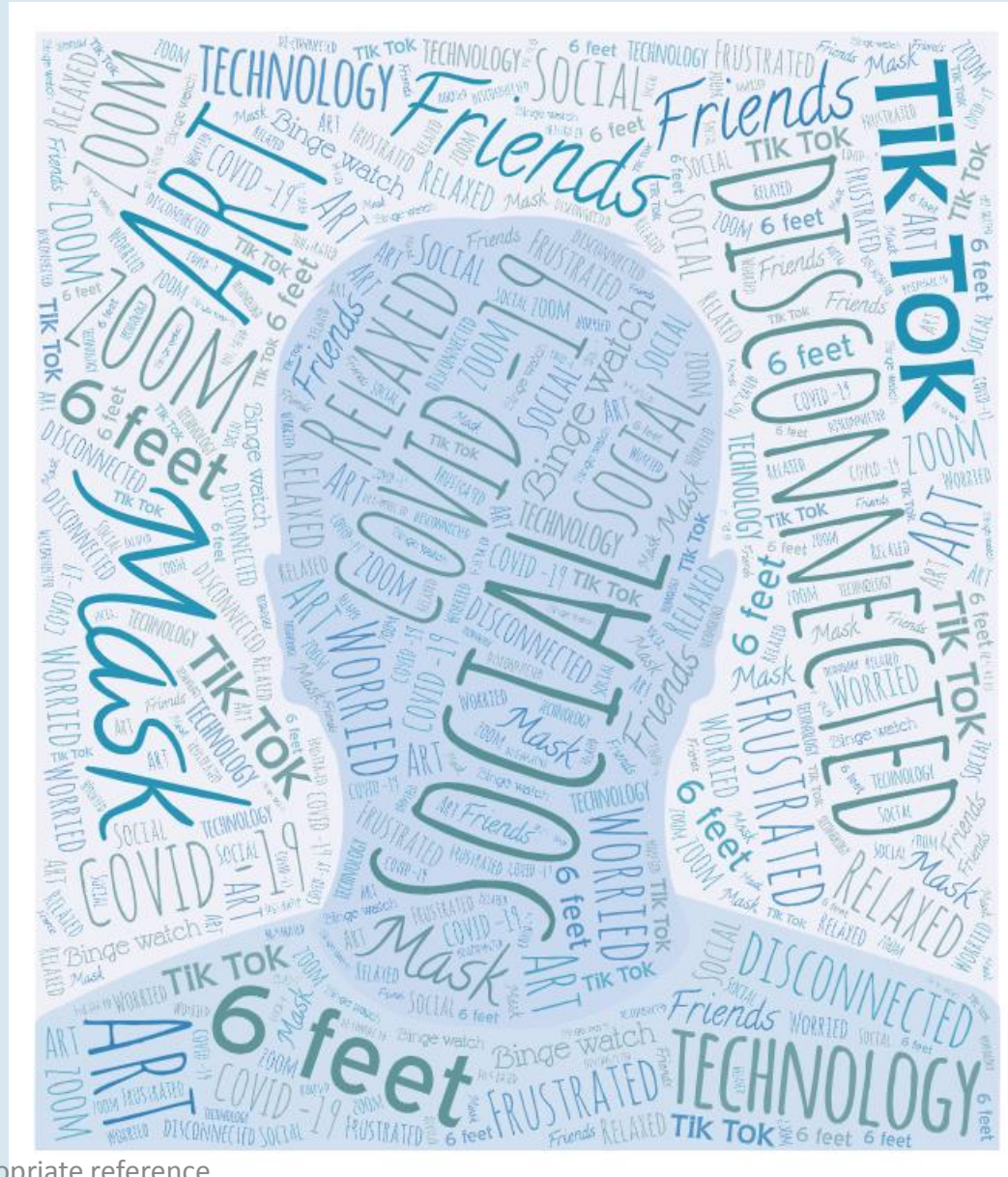
Strategies: switch it up

- Teacher student switch
 - Child teaches parent or grandparent
 - Grandparent teaches child
- Parent child role reversal, whose in charge
- In my shoes
 - Change places: exchange jobs, chores, life for an hour or more

Strategies: tech time

- Child, context, content
- Time & purpose
- Share & interact
- Learn: pick a topic art, literature, science, geography, history
- Listen: podcasts and discuss
- Skills: games, coding, photo shop, music, art, learn a magic trick or two, compete
- Phone is instrument: take a walk, take pictures of things looking like letters of the alphabet or objects starting with the letter
- Model & monitor: goes both ways

Word Collage



<https://wordart.com/create>

Resilience: gratitude



- Find a time each day (dinner, bed) for each member of the family
- Identify a positive of the day. Can be spoken, put in a journal, on slips and put in a jar and read at a special time

Silver lining: transformation

- Learning, change, positive growth
- Struggling through loss and hardship
- More than surviving or managing
- Family processes in resilience can yield personal and relational transformation
- Active coping efforts
- Reaching out to others
- Families tap resources that they may not have drawn on and gain new perspective on life

Walsh, 2016b

Mental health resources

- Personal networks: family, friends, teachers, clergy, pediatricians, find a therapist listing
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network nctsn.org
- CSTS Uniformed Services COVID-19 resources <https://www.cstsonline.org>
- Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990; text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746 (Spanish-speakers can text 'Hablanos' to 66746)
- NYC Well 1-888-NYC-WELL
- Health Information Tool for Empowerment (HITE) www.hitesite.org
- Help Now NYC (COVID-related assistance)
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/helpnownyc/index.page>
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