

Dear PCS Families,

I've been thinking about you over the past few days. I want to offer a few more wellness thoughts for the week.

As always, take what delights you and leave the rest. :)

1. Mood management. I've been noticing myself being quite irritable over small things. I caught myself yelling at the dog for barking in the car while I was driving. Yes, this is annoying, but the irritability and rage I felt were out of proportion. It made me realize how important my ability to self-soothe and my awareness about my reactivity are going to be over the coming weeks. I took a deep breath and calmed myself down. I reminded myself how much I love this dog. I reminded myself that my yelling or negative energy were likely to make the dog more anxious and bark more not less. I reminded myself to be kind to myself and to others and that the person I want to be is calm and kind. I connected with my heart. I encourage you to find what works for you to self soothe. If you find yourself feeling angry or irritable, can you take deep breaths? How about pausing and going for a quick walk? What messages do you need to tell yourself? Our beloved Kindergarten teachers Ms. Inge and Ms. Lindsey use the phrase "Name It To Tame It" for emotional health in their classroom. I love this. The basic idea is to acknowledge our feelings; simple say, "I am feeling _____". This alone can help the feeling just be, rather than taking you over, or causing you to react in a manner that is not in alignment with who you are and want to be. You can name your feelings to yourself in your head, write them down, or share with a loved one.

I highly recommend emotional expression and communication in general, too. Writing in a journal, talking to loved ones, and acknowledging your feelings will help decrease anxiety. See if you can simply allow your feelings to "be". Where do you feel them in your body? Can you sit with this? Give your feelings a little smile and relax. Give yourself a little smile and relax.

2. Minimize media and screen time: You and your student are going to be spending even more time viewing a screen because of the online component of our distance learning, especially at the junior and senior high levels. Be sure to take frequent breaks, get outside, get some exercise and give your brain and eyes a break. There are two things to consider here: first, simply viewing a screen (phone, tv, computer) is taxing to your brain and your mood. This is especially true of the typical blue screen of the average settings of our devices. If possible, especially in the evenings, decrease the amount of time you spend looking at a screen. Not looking at a screen for 1-3 hours before going to sleep is highly beneficial. Also, consider changing the light settings on your devices to be more in the red zone or decrease the brightness. Look at the settings in your phone and see if there is something called night shift.

The second thing to consider is media input. It is important to stay informed about what is going on right now, for sure! But consider limiting your media input about the virus to once a day to get informed and then focus on other things. Bombarding your system with the news right now could keep you in a constant state of agitation and anxiety. Give yourself a break. We can only do what we can do.

3. School Work: I know some of you are thriving with being home and staying on task with school work. Awesome! And I know some of you are really struggling to get on track, get started, and keep motivated. You are SO not alone! My heart goes out to you hugely. I want to encourage you to reach out for support with this for yourself and for your children. Your teachers really truly are here to help you. Call them. Email them. Ask them to help you. Maybe a personal phone call to your child from their teacher if you are having a hard time convincing them to do their school work? Remind your students that this is school work, not homework. So, yeah, it's a lot. We get that! And we are all on independent study now. So the workload is based on the hours we would be spending in the classroom. If there is anyway I can help, please reach out to me directly. I am more than happy to call you or your child to discuss what might help you/them feel more motivated. We are going to get through this time and be back in the classroom together in the future. The best way we can stay well is to do the things we need to do to have a sense of normalcy and productivity. Celebrate every piece of school work completed. Reward yourself and your students for their efforts and accomplishments.

Acknowledge the challenges and all the feelings involved with this adventure.
Sending you warmth and health and happiness,
Becky
(LMFT- PCS mental health therapist)