A Guide for Early Childhood Educators March 2020

Dear Early Childhood Educators,

As we all work to respond to this unprecedented pandemic and its effects on our schools, we wanted to share a few resources to assist you in supporting your families.

All of the materials contained herein are yours to share with the families in your school. If you would like certain things modified to better meet your needs (i.e. no snowstorms in the south!), please reach out to us.

Depending on the demand, we will do our best to make small changes so that these materials can be most useful to you.

We understand that this is a continuously evolving situation. We have tried to put together materials that reflect best practices in helping children adapt to changes in routines, using age-appropriate language and information.

As we all navigate this uncharted territory, we hope these materials are helpful.

Thank you,

Meredith Polsky and Stephanie Slater

***Routines Rituals and Predictability***

As we continue to grapple with a worrisome and frustrating time, our patience will undoubtedly be challenged. The joy of parenting can start to feel, well, joy-less. Setting yourself up in a way that limits stress and chaos could make a difficult period of time more manageable - and even enjoyable!

Children thrive on routines and predictability. As schools close and regular activities are postponed, days will be anything but typical for our young children. The more they feel a lack of control over their own time, the more they will behave in challenging ways.

Think about your own efficiency and productivity during a busy work week compared to a week when your office is closed. It often seems the more we have to do, the better we function.

Consider these three words as you prepare for the weeks ahead: Routine, Ritual, Predictability

**Routine**:​ Routines provide children with consistency, structure and organization. They give clear expectations and enable a child to process the beginning, middle, and end to each part of their day. Routines are not novel or unexpected. Children can feel confidence and ownership, knowing that they have already succeeded in mastering the routines of their day.

**Rituals:** Rituals ground children in their routines. They connect them emotionally to events. They give them comfort and provide a​foundation that is known and predictable. Especially during times of uncertainty, rituals bring familiarity and calm.

**Predictability:** Predictability gives children a sense of control. Even when it is hard to maintain a consistent routine, providing them​with the next few parts of their day can help them deal with the unknown. Verbiage like, “ *First*​ we will have breakfast and *then*​ ​we will head to the store,” gives children the opportunity to start planning and processing. It helps them make the transition from one part of their day to the next. Providing children with the wording, along with a visual representation of that wording, allows them to truly grasp and conceptualize what’s to come.

Helpful Links:

[Webinar](https://pepparentonline.org/courses/category/PEP%20Common%20Challenges%20Workshops) ​on talking with children about coronavirus (pre-recorded)

[Webinar](https://pepparentonline.org/p/family-life-with-coronavirus) ​on Tuesday, March 17​th​ about family life with coronavirus (register to participate live)

[Article](https://www.tinabryson.com/news/coronavirus-talking-points-for-parents-amp-teachers-with-the-whole-brain-child-approach?fbclid=IwAR35lTFVSMyg1YaL9uxJsBodlC4-jCiaAeRV9grxmQ9w1w8bmfV7NYxd2Bs) on talking to children about Coronavirus (Tina Payne Bryson, PhD)​

[Article](https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR2v7QuLL5ihQURfdMA6gr_QMMI2fq7x9E5Ub_qRToJUhnZIZD2Xr31MMq0) on talking to children about Coronavirus (Child Mind Institute)​

A Social Story:

My School is Closed Today































