

THE GREAT BODY SHOP

Come in and learn about your body!

FAMILY CONNECTION

Dear Kids,

Life sure is different than it was a couple months ago! For starters, most of you are attending school at home. Many of your parents have stopped working, or are working from home. Some of your parents are essential workers, and have to work more hours under stressful conditions. You probably don't leave the house often (except to go on walks and play outside), and when you do leave you probably wear masks or gloves. We call these changes the "new normal" but for most of us it is still pretty strange, and this strangeness can produce a lot of different feelings.

It is okay to be a little sad, anxious or scared, but it is important that you share these feelings with your family. Many of my young friends here at THE GREAT BODY SHOP had trouble adjusting, but with the help of their families, they found ways to feel better. Here are some tips based on their experiences:

1) Establish a routine

For Betsy, the hardest part of the "new normal" was not knowing what to expect when she got out of bed each morning. Before the Coronavirus Betsy went to school every day, had art and swimming classes a few afternoons a week, and spent evenings and weekends with her family and friends. Now everything is different. Betsy's father is a teacher, and he knows certain kids (like Betsy) do best when they have a routine. To make Betsy feel more comfortable he created a schedule. Now Betsy gets up at 7:30am Monday through Friday. She gets dressed, brushes her teeth, has breakfast, and then "goes to school" at the dining room table. She takes a morning break to have a snack and stretch her legs, and then finishes her school work before lunch. Between lunch and dinner Betsy has free choice, and likes to do things like exercise or create art. After dinner she can read, watch TV, or play board games with her family. Sometimes she does all three! The routine helps Betsy feel more secure.



2) Move your body and talk to your friends

Simon is very different from Betsy. In fact, his favorite part of the "new normal" is no alarm clocks and no schedule! Despite this, Simon felt very frustrated and sometimes sad several weeks after the stay-at-home order. At first, Simon did not want to talk to his dad about it, but finally he admitted how much he missed sports. Simon missed moving his body, laughing with his teammates and working towards a common goal. To help Simon feel better, his dad started an exercise routine. On nice days, they practice batting, pitching and running outside. On yucky days they do indoor exercises like jumping jacks and sit-ups. Simon's dad also set-up a weekly virtual meeting for Simon and his friends. They spend some of the time strategizing for next season, and some of the time just goofing off. Simon doesn't feel normal quite yet, and that is okay, but he is feeling much, much better.



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3) Try yoga or practice tummy breathing

Willie now likes yoga! When the stay-at-home order started Willie seemed completely fine, but every now and again, his heart would start racing and he would get a funny feeling in his stomach. Willie's mom explained that he might be feeling some anxiety. It took some time, but eventually she convinced Willie to practice yoga with her. The classes are online. At first Willie felt clumsy and embarrassed, but now he enjoys taking out his mat (his special blanket) and practicing beside his mom. The yoga instructor also taught Willie how to practice tummy breathing. Now, when he gets that funny, nervous feeling, he finds a quiet spot and puts his hands on his stomach. Willie inhales through his nose for 4 seconds, imagining the air filling his body from the bottom of his tummy through the top of his chest. Then exhales the air through his mouth for 4 seconds, feeling the air escape from his body. Tummy breathing always helps Willie feel calm.



4) Be in nature and/or give yourself some space

Out of all the kids, Mary has probably had the easiest time adjusting to life at home. Mary lives with many relatives, including her parents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. Consequently, she is never lonely. Mary has always loved having a big family, but she began to feel overwhelmed after the stay-at-home order. All the sudden the house began to feel very small, and a little too loud. Mary's older cousin helped her find a solution. Now, Mary takes daily walks through the nature preserve, near her home. She isn't exactly alone (her parents say she must stay within eye sight of her cousin) but she likes the quiet and having her own space. Nature has helped Mary feel better.



As you just read, Betsy, Simon, Willie and Mary are very different kids and the "new normal" has affected them in very different ways. Betsy felt out of control, Simon was very sad, Willie was anxious, and Mary felt overwhelmed. Since each kid had unique feelings, each kid needed a unique way to manage his or her feelings. These are called **coping mechanisms**. Perhaps, you have come up with some coping mechanisms yourself. Or maybe you need help brainstorming ways to feel better about staying at home. Either way, you can talk with your family, your teacher, or a different trusted adult. I am here to help, too. Please write in with your feelings, thoughts and ideas. I am eagerly waiting to hear from you!

Dear Families/Guardians: In THE GREAT BODY SHOP, we have been talking about many of the changes that have occurred over the last few months as a result of COVID-19. We have also been learning about different types of coping mechanisms. We encourage you to discuss the article and help your child brainstorm a list of strategies/coping mechanisms he/she can use at home to diffuse anxiety, sadness, anger, among other feelings. Post the list on the refrigerator or in a place where it can be easily seen.

When I feel _____, I can:

Dr. Smartstuff

If you have a question for Dr. Smartstuff or Dr. Thea, ask your teacher to send a letter to P.O. Box 7294 Wilton, CT 06897 or email DrSmartstuff@TheGreatBodyshop.net. Be sure your first name, grade, school, and school address are included.