

PARENT UPDATE

on

"When the S* Hits the Fan: Parenting during the Pandemic"**

Parenting has never been more challenging. How do we foster social development in the middle of a pandemic? How do we adjust screen use guidelines when kids are spending hours in zoom classes? And how do we keep our families grounded – and still speaking to one another -- when so much of today's life seems isolating and overwhelming?

The PTO/B-PEN webinar "**When the S*** Hits the Fan: Parenting during the Pandemic**" by parenting expert Joani Geltman (<http://www.joanigeltman.com/>), offered parents a wealth of practical insights, reassurance, and helpful strategies for parenting through these unprecedented challenges. As one parent remarked, "I'm so relieved to know I'm not the only parent whose child is sleeping through some classes and has dirty dishes all over the bedroom and wet towels under the bed."

Here are some of the event's top takeaways:

COMMUNICATION

- Everyone is overwhelmed and feeling loss. For teens, who live in the moment, those feelings are sharpened. **Acknowledging issues** opens up a space to relate and takes you out of reactionary mode. "**I get it...**" statements can be really helpful.
- Try to **stay calm** and use your chest voice when you can.
- **Take the long view** and don't get too caught up in daily drama. "This is just a moment in time..."

SETTING LIMITS

- Keep in mind that developmentally, kids want and need **independence**, even though that can be tricky during COVID.
- Let go of the unimportant power struggles. **Lower expectations.**
- Ask yourself – What are my **priorities** (appropriate sleep, doing chores, attending classes, etc.) What is my **bottom line**?
- Use **problem solving vs. nagging**. ("How can we make this work?")
- Try providing options to get buy in, and teach **reciprocal relationships** – quid pro quo. ("When you get the dishes done, we'll talk about going/doing...")
- After two reminders, enforce repercussions.

SCREEN TIME

- Balance screen time use for academics vs. the need for screens for entertainment and social connections, which they desperately need. **Lighten up on time limits.**
- Lots of new potentially risky apps out there - **consider parental controls** and monitoring through sophomore year. (www.protectyoungeyes.com is helpful.)

- Consider **internet shut downs** for the whole family, and **model healthy screen use**.
- To keep kids from spending ALL their time in their bedrooms, create another **dedicated space in the house for learning**.
- Make it appealing for kids to come out of their rooms – **incentives vs. nagging**.

SOCIAL LOSS

- Acknowledge our collective isolation and how hard it is not to feel unmotivated, depressed. Ask how you can **help re-energize**.
- What's a **good incentive** for your adolescent? Help facilitate something your child can look forward to – an activity, special privilege, favorite dinner/dessert, etc.
- **Help introverted kids connect** with others having similar interests, even if they are not their peers.
- Be creative with **opportunities to engage** – dog walking, tutoring, etc..
- Consider asking a charismatic adult (family member, babysitter, etc.) to reach out periodically to ask how your child is doing, as a kind of **informal check in**.

TAKE A BREATH!

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For more information on mental health, go to <https://www.b-pen.org/mental-health.html>.

If you detect signs of clinical depression/anxiety, BHS Prevention/Intervention Team can provide guidance, information, and resources (mary_minott@psbma.org, gabrielle_dean@psbma.org)

www.B-PEN.org

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