

## Welcome to Term 2!

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented time for many of us, especially for our children. Being away from school and out of normal routine has brought many new challenges, and I am sure for most, stress! The Centacare New England North West School Counselling team would like to offer our support to parents at this time.

### Talking to Children about COVID-19

Your child may be feeling scared and confused about COVID-19. Allowing your child opportunities to ask questions, and talk freely about their concerns, can help alleviate their anxiety.

**Be honest.** It is important to answer your child's questions truthfully, in an age appropriate way. Think about how much your child may be able to understand at this point. Stories such as 'The Oyster and the Butterfly', which is free to download on the internet, may be especially helpful for younger children,

**Be supportive of their feelings.** Allow your child to express how they feel and let them know you are there to support them.

**Reframing:** It may be helpful to think of negative aspects of home isolation into positives. For example, if your child is saying 'We are stuck inside', try re-framing this into a more positive way- "We may never get an opportunity like this again, to have so much quality time together!".

**Think about what you CAN control, not what you can't.** Often children can feel anxious when there are events are outside of their control. An activity to complete with your child may be to write down what they can control, and comparing this to what they can't control. Since we aren't able to control certain things, it is no use to worry about these things, so we can let them go.

**It is OK not to know the answers!** There may be questions that you do not know the answer to, or that there may be no answers to yet! It is fine to say, "We don't know, but we are working on it". It can also be an opportunity for you to learn something new, use it as an 'investigation' activity, and do a google search with your child.



**Teach and model good hygiene practices:** Teach your child to be proactive in looking after their health by following good hygiene practices. Show your child how to social distance, sing your child's favourite song while washing your hands, and teach coughing etiquette!

## Surviving Home Schooling!

**Create an environment for learning:** try to set out a quiet space and minimise distractions (e.g. the TV). Allow your child to have regular breaks, research suggests children can maintain attention for only 20 minutes! Scheduling in a 5-minute break, where your child can have a stretch, a drink of water, and pat the dog, can help stop restless students. Try to keep to a similar structure as the school day- start and end the day at the same times.

**Have patience.** There are likely to be times when both parents and children will get frustrated with each other! Children are more likely to do tasks and chores when they are asked to, rather than told to. For example, asking 'Can you do the dishes now?' will be more effective than saying 'Stop watching TV and do the dishes!'.

**Stay connected with friends:** School is very important for maintaining a child's social connections, and this may be something they are missing while they are at home. Talk to your child about how they would like to stay connected. Some suggestions include have a video call with friends during lunch, schedule in a 'virtual play date' after school, or writing letters to friends!

**Remember- you're not the teacher.** For some parents, the stress of home schooling can come from trying to take on too much responsibility and becoming the role of 'teacher'. Parents should think of their role more as a teacher's aid- you are there to help facilitate learning. It may be helpful to read through the teacher's outline of what your child will be learning for that day. If your child is having difficulty with a problem, you are not expected to know the solution. Instead, help your child by guiding them to find a solution themselves.



## Looking After Your Mental Health.

It will be even more difficult to support your children without first supporting yourself. Self-care, the actions we do to look after our bodies and minds, is important to maintain during this time:

Eat a balanced diet, with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Try to limit your alcohol intake. Avoid fatty foods, these will just make you feel more sluggish.

Exercise: One of the greatest ways to reduce stress! It can also be a great way to have fun as a family- take the dog for a walk, have a dance competition, or relax with some yoga tutorials on YouTube.

Have some time out for yourself: make a 15-minute window where you do something nice for yourself. It could be having a coffee and watching your favourite show on Netflix.

Get some sun! With us staying indoors more often, and Winter coming up, it's important to get some vitamin D. Ten minutes a day is enough.

Sleep: the average person needs 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night. Your body works best when it has a sleep routine- try to wake up and go to sleep at the same time every day.

Remember, if you are struggling, there is support available. Students can access 6 free counselling sessions for students through Centacare NENW. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also offering counselling sessions for parents as well. To arrange an appointment, please contact your school counsellor.

Emily Fraser, Provisional Psychologist  
Phone: 6738 7233 Email: [e.fraser@centacarenenw.com.au](mailto:e.fraser@centacarenenw.com.au)



If you need immediate support NOW, you can contact:

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14      **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800

Wishing you and your family all the best this Term!

The Catholic Schools Office Counselling Team.  
Centacare New England North West