

Thursday 15th April 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

I am sure you will all agree that yesterday was a strange way to start a new term together. Along with millions of children across the nation, Northside students all experienced their first day of Remote Learning.

I recorded a video message on campus yesterday which I encourage you to watch after reading this by clicking on the link below:

<https://youtu.be/eT2m3K3Qs2o>

I don't expect that this phase of school life will be smooth sailing from the beginning. In fact, there are bound to be challenges and early problems to solve, but NCC staff are committed to making this work and staying connected to you and your children throughout this period. We will constantly be evaluating how things are going and adapt accordingly to ensure every child has the best possible chance to continue to learn effectively, receive valuable feedback and make good progress so that when we are able to return to normal, your children will be more than ready to maintain the pathway that they were already on before this current crisis emerged.

For our College community, it has always been about so much more than education. We all value the connections we have with each other which have been forged over the months and years that we have spent together. These connections must continue and not be neglected during this time of being physically apart from each other. As a College, therefore, we want to continue to invest in all of our Northside families and support you in what ever way we can during these difficult times.

As part of our commitment to you, we are endeavouring to call every family for a weekly "check in" to see how you are doing. The wellbeing of all of our parents and guardians is very important to us and we want to provide as much support as we possibly can. Also, along with this letter, I have attached a booklet titled **"Family Matters"** which has been created by our Head of Student Wellbeing, Fiona Dumitrache. It is a useful resource which will assist you greatly as you adjust to having your child at home learning remotely.

Finally, a big thankyou from me to all of you for your ongoing support of the College. The old saying is that crises often bring out both the best and the worst in us. However, I can honestly say that the only thing I have observed so far from our Northside community, is the very best.

Grace & Peace



Damian Higgins
Principal

FAMILY MATTERS!



Managing Well During Exceptionally Unusual and Difficult Times!

FOR PARENTS & CARERS

There have been many resources created by your child's teacher as well as College Leadership so this focus is on support for YOU, the parent or carer. The goal is not to overload you further but to provide some tips as you set up your priorities and family tone for learning from home with your kids.

INCLUDED:

- ♦ Working together
- ♦ Acknowledge & Accept
- ♦ Life Balance
- ♦ Listening & Responding
- ♦ Flipped Lids & Flipped Thinking
- ♦ Play, Prayer & Praise



SUPPORTING & SHARING IS CARING...

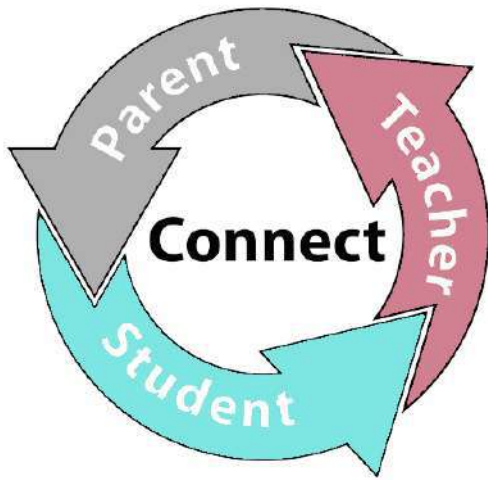
These are incredibly different, difficult and devastating times. The important first step is for us not to just to KNOW what's happening around us but to ACKNOWLEDGE it. Challenges, change and difficulties happen all the time, even in life altering ways, but not usually on a global scale. These times are proving to be inconvenient and even devastating. Yet it's not the first time our world has been through such challenges. It's normal to feel resistant to change and frustrated with the challenges so it's important to remember that we are part of a working and learning community.

God created us as whole beings: spiritual, physical, social and psychological. Therefore, as parents, it's important to be able to set the atmosphere within the family that will nurture each part of us.



RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE RIGOR
GRACE BEFORE GRADES
PATIENCE BEFORE PROGRAMS
LOVE BEFORE LESSONS

DR. BRAD JOHNSON



WORKING & LEARNING TOGETHER

If you are working from home, out of work, or working out of the home, be in communication with your child's teacher. The College is here WITH you, endeavouring to creatively support you all.

PRIORITIES

Yours and your children's **mental health and wellbeing** is the MOST important thing. As such, do emotional check-ins regularly throughout the day, even for yourself. If you or your child needs some space and a bit of time, respect this and show kindness.

FAMILY MEETINGS

Set **regular** times to meet as a family to plan and communicate about the day as well as to resolve conflicts early on. Avoid blaming but foster & encourage each to focus on self responsibility with the agreements you make as a family and as individuals.

SET TIMES

During learning time, focus on set times rather than tasks as each student works **differently** and at different speeds.

CHUNK TIME

Create **small** pockets of learning times rather than focusing on the three hours of work that needs to be completed in the day. This allows kids to settle into the task of the moment. For older students having them set and share with you their schedule for the day assists in reducing conflict with a student trying to be independent and a parent/carer's anxiety in seeing if they are sticking to a plan.

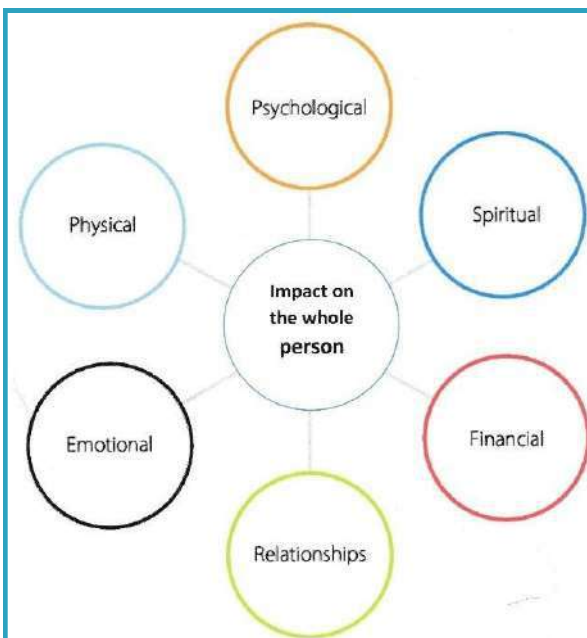
ROUTINES

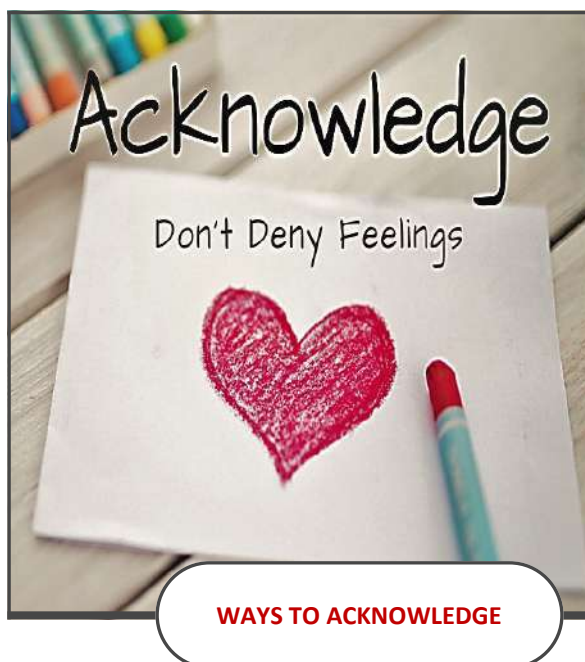
Create routines that suit **your** family, your child and his/her development and age. A slightly later start might suit most teens, but create a start time rather than depending on "when you wake up". This is still school, but done from home, and this is one joy of the flexibility of remote learning!

CELEBRATE

Celebrate **achievements** and focus on the "gold" – effort, understanding, persistence, aha moments... This is important in supporting ongoing motivation!

NOTE: HOME ROUTINES during REMOTE LEARNING time will assist your child to TRANSITION BACK TO SCHOOL when this time comes.





1. Prayerfully
2. Support
3. Control

1. BE PRAYERFUL AND KNOW GOD

- * **He loves us!** 1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. His perfect love for us drives away fear.
- * **He cares for us.** 1 Peter 5:7 Give Him all your worries because He cares for YOU!
- * **He sustains us.** Isaiah 41:10 Don't fear, for I am with you; do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will give you what you need.
- * **He protects us.** Psalm 46:1 God is our protection and strength, always helping in trouble.
- * **He gives peace.** Philippians 4:6-7 With gratitude pass on our anxieties to God. Because of Jesus, God's peace will protect our hearts.
- * **He changes us.** Psalm 94:19 He comforts us in grief and turns our sense of anxiety into security.
- * **He gives wisdom.** Luke 12:22-26 Worrying doesn't add time to our life but makes our difficulties appear worse than they are. God will provide.
- * **He is in control.** Revelation 1:17 Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last. While fear shows up, feel His touch of reassurance.

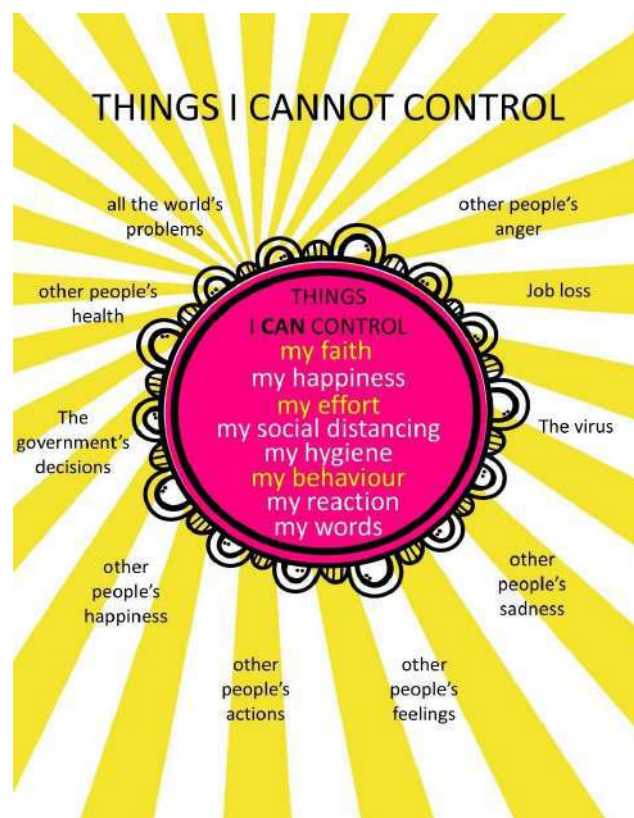
2. SUPPORT

- A. **Reach out** to those who are positive and who have similar values. Include them in your daily working circle. When sucked into a negative void we become unproductive and it makes it difficult to set a positively emotional and regulated environment for the family.
- B. Reach out to the family's GP to seek some additional **professional help** as needed.
- C. Keep your usual **connections** through support services if this was part of your self-care plan before COVID-19.

NOTE: Families who have experienced their own recent **trauma** may find this time more difficult.

3. CONTROL

Recognise the differences to our normal and accept these changes as a temporary normal. When focus is on what we CAN control then we can make helpful decisions and make progress! When we focus on things out of our control feel frustrated, anxious & stuck!





LIFE BALANCE

1. Create spaces
2. Claim territory allocation
4. Task allocation
5. Time

Setting up rules for life balance during working and learning from home will assist everyone as the honeymoon period of remote learning wears off and will allow for healthy boundaries. Talk about how everyone can be respectful of each other's space so that you can each achieve what you'd like to too without space invasions all the time!

1. CREATE SPACES

All family members need to have spaces in the home that define **work** and **play**. This helps us to feel:

- ⇒ Comfortable
- ⇒ focused
- ⇒ settled.

Put something in each workspace, or allow your children to do a little decorating, to signify it as "mine".

If your home is small and spaces are used for both purposes then use **time** as your space boundary. That is, from 9-10:15am this is my working/learning space. From 10:15am-11am it becomes a family play space. Even set a timer if necessary.

Headphones can also be helpful in shared spaces during learning and working times.

2. CLAIM TERRITORY

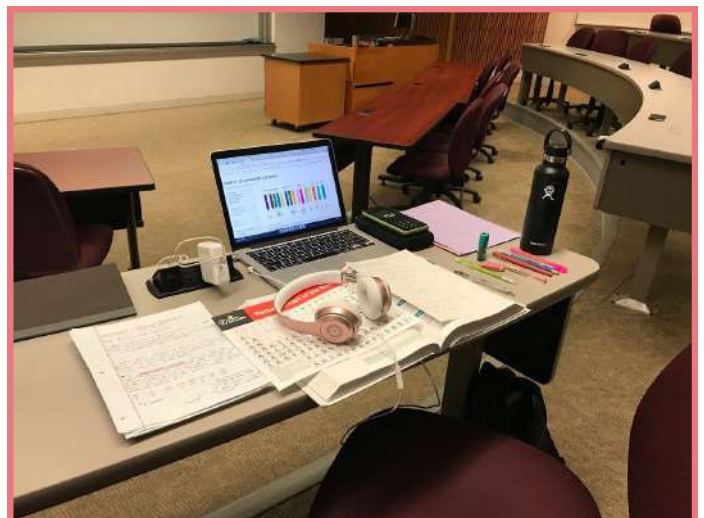
This will assist everyone as the honeymoon period of remote learning and working kicks in and will allow for healthy boundaries to be established. Talk about how everyone can respect each other's space so that you can each achieve what you'd like to too without space invasions all the time!

3. COMMUNICATE

When everyone is feeling unsure about "how to do this", we tend to become demanding in order to feel calm inside. *Within a classroom setting there are class rules that help everyone to be respectful.*

You will have your own family rules, so extend these to your home, as the new & temporary setting for learning and working.

For example, you may start your child off on a learning task, explain that you need to work for the next 20 minutes and cannot be interrupted during this time, but reassure them that you will return after this time. Then make sure you do return at the time you promised.



4. TASK ALLOCATION

Your family's usual allocation of tasks will likely need to be modified. Write all the necessary jobs down and negotiate who can do what. Even if a chore is not completed to a usual standard it will be healthy & helpful for young people of any age to contribute.

5. TIME ALLOCATION

Life Rhythm

Balance:

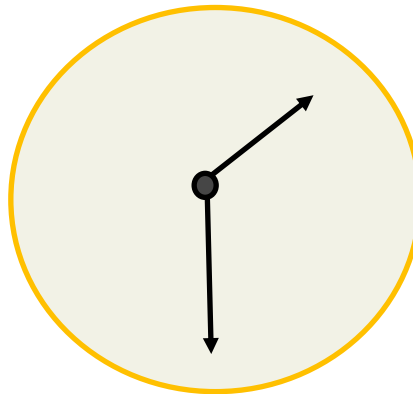
Set times for **ME & WE** time now that all life activities happen in one location. Younger children may become clingier whilst teens may seek more space, or a combination of both! Developmentally teens enjoy ME time with friends.

Sleep:

To sustain daily energy and effectiveness, routine and good sleep hygiene is vital. It also adds to more positive mood, rhythm for sense of security, and increased capacity to problem solve & concentrate.

Exercise:

Without the usual movement from place to place planning some time for exercise is needed. The release of endorphins helps us to feel good & dopamine release helps us to stay focused.



Eating:

Have specific times for eating. Grazing all day will create sluggishness and add to irritability. Choose your usual healthy foods & eating routine. Remember that food in should match active energy expended.

Sustained self-care:

Tag team with your partner or support person so that you can have time to breath, think & do something on your own. Even 30 minutes a day will help you to keep a sense of wellbeing.

Social with a twist:

School is a social place so be active in promoting times for everyone to chat or “play with” friends & family.

FLIPPING YOUR LID

FLIPPING THOUGHTS

Usually the three parts of our brains, the Cortex, Limbic Region and Brain Stem, are able to work well together so that we can think rationally & safe.

When our senses pick up on danger or threat, our body prepares for a fight, flight, freeze or faint response.

Due to currently living in a longer-term state of stress we may find ourselves not being able to think well & being preoccupied with danger and all the “noise” around that danger. For example fighting over and hoarding toilet paper or clearing the supermarket shelves! This is not how we would normally respond day to day, but due to the prolonged stress response, our bodies are arming for self-protection. And for parents, the responsibility to provide for our children’s safety is also triggered. This is one reason for feeling the need to keep checking social media or to keep the TV on.

Yet, too much input makes it hard for the thinking part of our brain to filter out the key things, and can even decrease our ability to bring our Cortex back online. This can leave us overwhelmed, in a state of panic, and overthinking. If we don’t focus on what we CAN do we may even become shutdown, numb, tired, flat and passive.

Taking back control of our flipped lids helps us to look after our health and wellbeing over a sustained period.

Rather than feeling abandoned, reassure yourself and your children of God's love for us. Despite living in a sinful world where bad stuff happens, God has us in his hands.

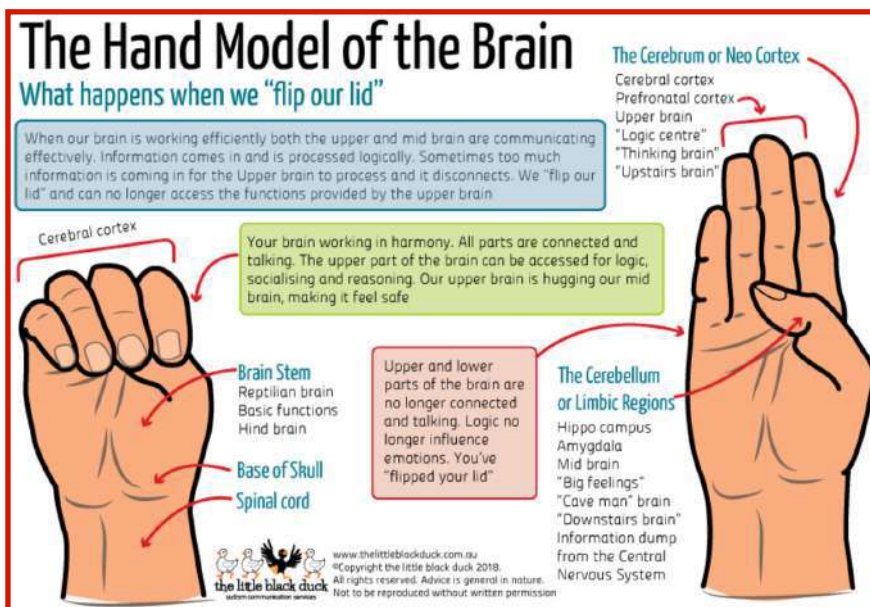
Rather than panic, create safe, reassuring, dependable and predictable environments that include routine. Be open to adjusting these expectations as time progresses, depending on your family’s needs.

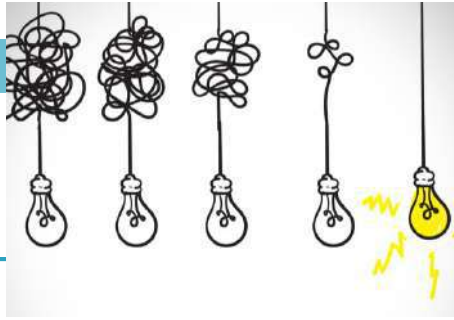
Rather than being stuck in sadness, be informed. Focus on the recoveries, the research, the work being done to bring us to the other side of the crisis. See your family within community, not alone.

Rather than buying into the sense of isolation, consider the changes as a reset button to doing life differently just now.

Rather than feel it’s all too hard talk about different opportunities your family has in this unique situation and see them as possible positive times.

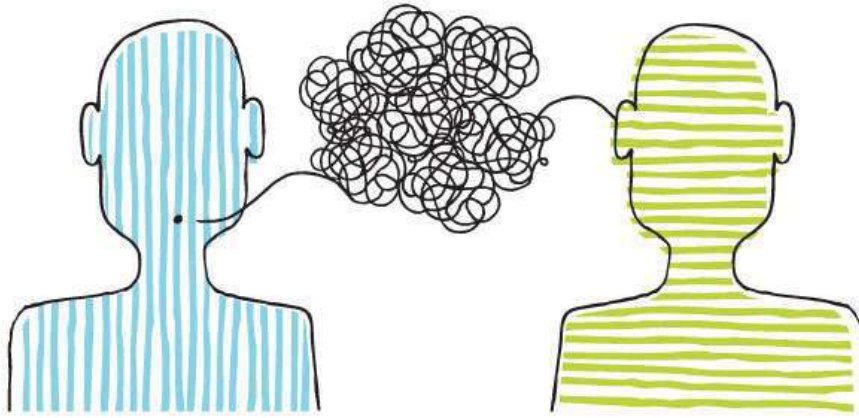
Consider everyone’s resilience & strengths in working together as a family & community, with kindness, support and creativity, even though it may be difficult or different.





PRACTICE

	
I'm stuck in this house & can't go out 😞	I'm doing the best thing to stop the spread of the virus and can organise a zoom with my friends
Look at how many people have died!	Look at how many people have recovered!
I can't play with my friends	I miss my friends but I can have a FaceTime play
I'm going to get sick and die!	I am doing everything I can to stay healthy. If I do get sick it will likely only be for a short time. There are people who can help me.
I have to stay home forever!	I don't know how long I have to stay home exactly, and it's a bit frustrating. But right now I'm helping our community to stay safe.
I'm going to get behind in my schoolwork/work!	These are different and challenging times but we're all doing our best. On the other side of this we will work together to fill in the gaps, just like we're working together now. I'm OK
I hate my life! I'm missing all the fun of being in year 6 /year 12	The College is working hard to support students. Even though it won't be the same I can help to organise celebrations when it's safe to do so. No school year has EVER looked like this! Truly exceptional times!



Everyone will respond or react differently towards the changes to day to day life and routines, as well as to disappointments and grief of cancellation or postponement of planned special events, and celebrations. The way that you manage your own feelings will determine the emotional tone you set,

Listen and respond

FULL ATTENTION

EMPATHICALLY – Show that you hear *their* story.

RESPECTFULLY – really *listen* to what each one is saying without jumping in with solutions.

BRIEFLY & SIMPLY – many people tend to get lost in too much *detail*.

ALLOW FOR
SILENCE

FACTUALLY – respond to questions with facts, avoid telling everything you know, but respond to what they *want* to know.

KINDLY – sometimes we may not *understand* the connections others have made about bits of information they hear.

VALIDATING – show that you heard by repeating words or phrases and reassure of your *support* in their quest for clarification & answers.

GIVE TIME

BODY LANGUAGE
matches WORDS

PATIENTLY – allow for them to have *input* and be patient while they try to express themselves or their thoughts. Some people, especially teens and children, find it easier to chat **WHILE** doing something. For example, having a conversation while cooking, doing a puzzle, drawing, walking, over a hot chocolate.

POSITIVELY – talk about resilience and courage, kind acts, funny memes of human behaviour, the many people who are working to help everyone - including us in self isolation and remote learning or working.

REPEAT WORDS OR
PHRASES CLARIFY

TELL ME MORE

WE TIME

A family that plays, prays & praises together
stays together.

FUN

Create a boredom buster with these
written on slips of paper or popsticks.

- ◆ Lockdown Lego Masters – choose a theme each time eg Fantasy holiday
- ◆ Board games
- ◆ Puzzles – both logic and picture
- ◆ Create music
- ◆ Zoom in with another family for worship
- ◆ Kitchen science
- ◆ Gardening
- ◆ Learn a new skill
- ◆ “Old school” - what did your grandparents overtly pass on to your parents. Eg sew on a button, take up a hemline, change a tyre, tie a necktie, learn a family recipe, knit, polish shoes, braid hair
- ◆ Plan and prepare a special meal
- ◆ Create a Saturday theme day with everyone contributing to some part of it – food, dress, skyping extended family in, invitations
- ◆ Go to the “theatre” with popcorn and snacks and watch a movie or documentary
- ◆ Take a virtual tour to a place you’ve always wanted to go. <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>
- ◆ Write a play / journal / story / song documenting the changes to our usual life. Take photos or find images
- ◆ Pretend to be ... a tour guide of your backyard, an expert in the field of immunology ...
- ◆ Arrange a virtual house party
- ◆ Try family or individual fitness challenges. There are apps or YouTubers offering free daily sessions. Do PE classes together!
- ◆ Learn a language
- ◆ Take a virtual visit of an aquarium or zoo
- ◆ Take a tutorial from an artist – drama, visual arts
- ◆ Clean and declutter, redesign
- ◆ Go for a walk and do a nature hunt with a focus – leaves, flowers, things that are orange
- ◆ Solve a mystery
- ◆ Write a note to the vulnerable or those working in essential services
- ◆ Make something for those in your neighbourhood.
- ◆ Learn first aid
- ◆ Plan a holiday
- ◆ Investigate your family tree
- ◆ Upcycle a piece of clothing or household item
- ◆ Read
- ◆ Create out of the recycle tub

GRATITUDE

At any time, but especially during difficult times, cultivate a mind and heart that is grateful.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11 New Living Translation (NLT) *“For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.”*

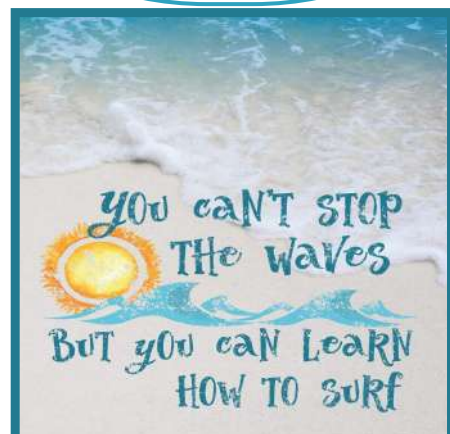
This may help in knowing how to start building a spirit of gratefulness.

Grateful for one experience I had today

Learned or discovered one thing today

Accomplished something today

Delighted in something or something that touched your heart



RESOURCES

It will be easy to get task orientated...

instead

BREATHE, RETHINK, GENTLY COMMUNICATE, CHEER ON, CELEBRATE!

Kids learn from what we do and what we say.

It's important parents and carers support each other...

be compassionate, gentle, respectful and kind...

to sooth worry, disappointment, anger, fear and uncertainty



SHARED PARENTING ARRANGEMENTS:

You may be managing your child moving from one parent's home to another. There are a number of resources online but this one may be a helpful starting point.

<http://www.legalaid.qld.gov.au/Find-legal-information/Relationships-and-children/Children-and-parenting/Ten-tips-for-separated-parents-during-COVID-19>

Videos and PDFs available in support of families by Christian practitioners:

<http://www.lifetherapiesvictoria.com.au/>

Christian "Focus on the Family" Parenting and Marriage relationships during crisis resources – videos, podcasts, articles:

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-time-during-the-coronavirus-quarantine/?889501>

Range of Community Service hotlines & contact points:

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/find-help/domestic-violence-hotlines/>

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Compiled for you by Fiona

