

REMEMBERING OUR LITTLE ONES DURING THE CIRCUIT BREAKER

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Telecommuting to work, home-based learning, social distancing, no dine-in, no physical church services for the time being, and an extended circuit breaker period. These have become familiar words and phrases for the past few weeks during this Covid-19 pandemic season.

While it is important to remain self-aware with the various emotions that we are experiencing as adults and learning to manage them appropriately, some parents might be wondering what to do with their kids.

Here are some thoughts to bear in mind as we think of our little ones during this circuit breaker time:

1. KEEP ROUTINES IN PLACE

Setting and sticking to a regular schedule is a key factor during this season, even if the children are at home all day. The schedule should encompass consistency and structure – ensuring kids getting up, eating and going to bed at their normal times, just as per an ordinary schooling day. Children, who are particularly inclined towards anxiety would benefit from the certainty in knowing what is going to happen and when. Schedules can also alternate between times of study and play, and it can look different between child to child within the family.

2. KEEP REMINDERS AT HAND

It might be helpful to go through the schedule with your child either the night before or each morning before they start their day. Providing regular reminders such as setting a timer or a special unique ringtone will assist in reducing meltdowns when it is time to transit from one activity to the next. Remember that sometimes anxiety and stress shows up in a child as anger, resistance, lack of concentration and focus as well as negativity.

3. KEEP RECREATION AND CREATIVITY MOVING

Having activities that the family is able to do together not only helps in strengthening family bonding times, but also keeps the physical body moving. Each family member (yes, including the kids) can take turns coming up with ideas for family activities. Parents can think about games they used to play growing up and teach them to their children whilst children can engage their parents in some technology activities, thereby also making this time a learning experience for all who are involved.

4. KEEP REACHING OUT AND ENSURING THE SOCIAL AND SUPPORT NETWORK REMAINS OPEN

Allow your children to use social media (within boundaries) and to FaceTime or Skype with their friends and other family members. Communication can assist in allowing kids to feel less alone and mitigate the stress that comes from not being able to be with their friends and other family members physically. It also plays an important role in helping to regulate the mood of your child and allows them to stay grounded. Seek to understand and acknowledge their frustration about not being able to be in school, to play with their friends or to celebrate events with loved ones. Make plans to have some virtual activities that they can do when they communicate via technology – a virtual birthday celebration, a virtual dinner meal, the possibilities are endless.

5. KEEP RECHARGING AND STRENGTHENING YOUR CHILD'S SPIRITUAL HEALTH

No Sunday school services for your children? This does not mean that the spiritual health of your children need to take a backseat. Schedule in times of praise and worship, where this could be listening and watching a praise and worship song (following some actions for younger children) online, leveraging on some of the virtual Sunday school online services that are readily available (if your church does not have a Sunday school service online for your children) and also times where you can be praying together with your child about this current Covid-19 pandemic, thereby increasing sensitivity to the needs of others.

This can be an overwhelming time for parents as they seek to navigate and manage the household, their own workload along with home-based learning for the children whilst counting down to the end of the circuit breaker time. Yet, this can also be an opportune time for enhancing and strengthening the family system, along with building healthier relationships with our children.

Jesus encouraged us in John 14:27 (NKJV):

***“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;
not as the world gives do I give to you.
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”.***

We can be assured that as we journey on during this period of time, we are able to reach out to the Lord for His peace and protection, and by His grace, we are able to extend patience and love not just to our children, but to others around us as well.

For further help during this time, please contact any of the following hotlines:

- **National Care Hotline:** 1800-202-6868
- **Mental Well-being**
 - Institute of Mental Health's Mental Health Helpline (6389-2222)
 - Samaritans of Singapore (1800-221-4444)
 - Silver Ribbon Singapore (6385-3714)
- **Violence or Abuse**
 - Big Love Child Protection Specialist Centre (6445-0400)
 - HEART @ Fei Yue Child Protection Specialist Centre (6819-9170)
 - PAVE Integrated Services for Individual and Family Protection (6555-0390)
 - Project StART (6476-1482)
 - TRANS SAFE Centre (6449-9088)