



## SELF CARE

Explore new ways to proactively support your mental health and wellbeing through acts of self care. Find relaxing, mindful activities that leave you feeling calm, refreshed and confident in life.

## ALONE TIME

Being disconnected can seem scary, but use this time to enjoy solitude. Get to know yourself, spend time in reflection and be proactive about how you spend your time alone.

## UNPLUG

Escaping the anxieties of this crisis is nearly impossible on social media. Take this as an opportunity to unplug for a bit. You might be surprised at the relief you have as a result of shutting out all the noise.

## FAMILY TIME

With children home from school, this is a great time to bond as a family. Listen, play and explore fun activities with your children. Support them during this turbulent time.

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

# Together Facing the Challenge

Spring Newsletter, 2020

## Building Resilience Through Strengthening Relationships and Practicing Self-Care

We are thinking about all our agency partners their staff, foster families and children, and are hoping everyone is staying healthy and safe during these unprecedented and uncertain times we currently face.

Just prior to restrictions which limited in-person group contact due to the coronavirus, we had an opportunity to conduct a 3-day TFTC training event in Jackson, NC. We held a joint training with three local Departments of Social Service - Jackson, Cherokee, and Swain Counties (pictured below). It was great to be with a group of agencies working together to achieve a common goal. They along with two other sites (which will be trained at a later date), all were very interested in partnering with the TFTC team, despite a barrier due to their location in rural mountain communities in Western NC. They believed their success would be greatly enhanced by partnering together on this initiative!



The COVID-19 virus has been a disruption to us all. We want to use this edition of the TFTC newsletter to acknowledge that. But we also want to share ways folks are adapting to these new circumstances. Our staff share some of their experiences; how they have developed strategies to adjust to school closings and creating new formats for teaching their children, how they have been having fun together, and how they are learning to better manage their stress level by finding effective self-care methods. Strengthening relationships within families, and building resilience, may be positive outcomes we can all benefit from as we move forward. — Maureen Murray

### **Family Fun During Quarantine**

This time of social distancing and quarantine feels very isolating to so many of us. As a momma of five, who continues to work from home, and learning to balance a life of 'quarantine school', a husband who has moved home based for work, and the loss of school and childcare resources, I found myself struggling to have any kind of fun. I just wanted to survive the day and make it to the next. But my family was starting to suffer with my mentality of survival mode. After some reflection and conversations, I realized that family fun was what was missing. So my husband and I made a plan.

We had lots of 'free and easy' at home activities already, like a picnic in the yard, or movie night with popcorn in the living room; but to get through the pandemic, we knew we'd need something more than our regular activities.

Our list now includes things such as: trampoline dance parties (fresh air & exercise!), bike races, hopscotch with sponges (wet sponges, lay them out in a hopscotch pattern, and jump away!), Karaoke nights, Backwards day (clothes on backwards, breakfast for dinner and dinner for breakfast, etc.), Ice cream shop (we order a couple different ice creams and pretend we're at the ice cream shop), as well as our crowd favorite: 'What did you say?!' A silly game of telephone but using silly accents. It's a hoot.

We're learning to have fun in the uncertain times by pressing pause and just doing something silly for a few minutes. It helps adjust our attitudes and lessens the stress of being on one another's nerves when we can laugh together.

— Michelle Wingate

### **Self-Isolation Plus One Please**

He asks for a snack every 30 minutes,  
created a schedule; but at this point "just forget it".

We try to walk around the neighborhood once a day,  
He asks me to race and my body says "no" but my brain says "okay".

Then I instantly regret it because now I can't breathe,  
He protests and sits on the curve and because he's under-age, I can't leave.

Trying to manage his school assignments, life, and work causes great stress,

My laundry hasn't been done and my hair is total mess.  
If YouTube goes offline and if the internet was to crash,  
I fear for the snacks that I have in my stash.

Target runs are not the same,  
Not going as frequently is hard as COVID is to blame.  
Time has slowed down,

I miss my friends and family being around.

But we are healthy and loved from afar,

We are thankful for those who are working hard to keep us safe,  
they know who they are.

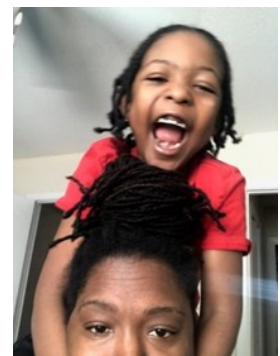
For this moment is one for the books,

One day we will laugh and reminisce and won't ponder on how much time it took. — Shaneka Bynum

Before COVID



Since COVID



"Pay attention to your patterns. The ways you learned to survive may not be the ways you want to continue to live. Heal and shift." - Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis

## Surviving Homeschooling – Setting up Schedules

*“I’m 30 minutes into homeschooling my kids, and I think that teachers should earn a billion dollars a year”* – seen on Twitter on March 14, 2020

If the above twitter post resonates with you on any level, you might be among the millions of Americans who have recently found ourselves unexpectedly trying to juggle two very demanding tasks - homeschooling our kids and working productively from home. Each standalone task requires significant attention, planning, and time to be successful. When we try to do them simultaneously, this can present a true challenge. And, we know that the more stress we (and our kids) feel, the more difficult it is to parent effectively.

My simplest recommendation for parents – create schedules. Think back to when you were in school – no matter what age we were, our lives revolved around the school day. There were posted schedules, school bells indicating transitions, and other ways to reinforce daily routines. Kids are used to this kind of weekday structure. Scheduling also provides an additional level of support for youth in care who have been exposed to trauma. Routines and predictability are essential. Another way to increase the trauma-informed potential of “homeschooling” is to ensure youth have a say in creating their schedules. In fact, with a bit of guidance, kids of many ages can write their own. Allow for kids to individualize/decorate them too.



8:00-8:55	Get ready	clothes, hair, teeth, bathroom, breakfast
9:00-9:55	school work	reading, Project writing-Journal science, Spelling, Prodigy
10:00-10:30	chores	rooms, floors, Prodigy clean, washroom
10:30-11:30	exercise	Stairs, swing, hams, yard walk, sports, in a pool, basketball, and 7 coloring
11:30-12:00	creativity	dance, Paint, Play music, rooms, Short videos, sees car
12:00-12:55	Lunch	
1:00-1:55	Free Play	rooms, hams, swing, drawing, drama, mandala, story problems, free math
2:00-2:55	math	cards, math on a card, Prodigy
3:00-3:55	Reading	by myself, Reading, Raz-Kids Reading with Parents

always a good Scegle

There are certain elements that you should encourage youth to include when creating their daily routines/ calendars:

- Transition time between events
- Creativity Time
- Exercise / Outside Play
- Free Play

My two children also created “A” and “B” schedules for themselves (with the same components but a different order) so they can choose each day which schedule they want to follow. This can help kids feel more grounded and in control of their days.

Try to also set up a space for your youth to do certain activities, and allow them the flexibility to be creative with how these spaces look. If possible, attempt also to help your youth stay connected to peers and teachers in whatever way possible (phone calls, Zoom meetings, FaceTime, etc.). Maintaining these connections helps increase feelings of normalcy and safety. Some parents might even find that they need to schedule brief “mindful moments” for the family at various anchor points of the day to help lower stress. Finally, offer yourself and your youth grace – this is a stressful time for everyone. Laugh, play, have fun. Acknowledge that change is difficult, and expect that some kids need more “breaks,” shorter activity blocks, or additional adult support than others. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to connect with and appreciate your family on a deeper level. As my daughter says, “Remember to do your gratitude every day.” — Don Bartosik



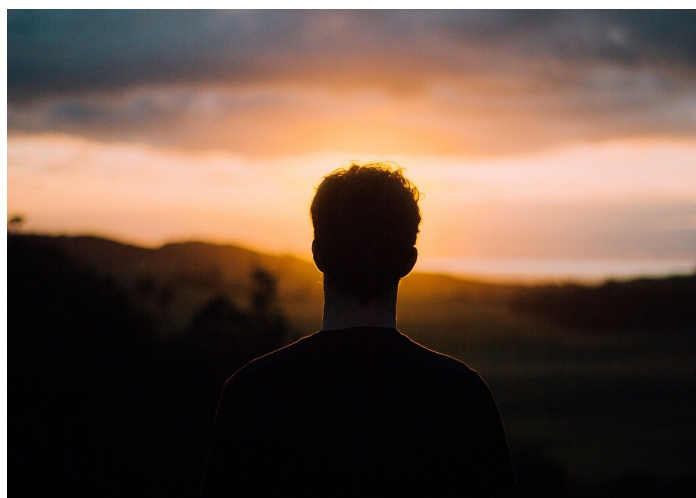
## Got a Minute?

As we all have been sequestered and trying to adjust to the “new normal,” I have been putting some renewed energy into developing a self-care plan. I have also been ruminating on to what degree I have been “practicing what I preach.” You see, here’s the “skinny” .... as a certified TFTC trainer, when I facilitate Session 7, I have regularly “preached” (“harped” might be a more appropriate description) that each us should focus on developing stress-reducing self-care strategies that we can access regularly/daily, and that our self-care strategies need not take much time. I confess I haven’t really been doing that until a few weeks ago.

One of my favorite authors, John Eldredge (also a teacher and counselor) has written a book entitled “Get Your Life Back” which has been helpful to me as of late. John’s explicit intent, through the book, is to offer some helps/practices, what he refers to as “graces,” to help us slow down and experience peace, renewal and restoration of our souls. One of the helpful “graces” in the book that he puts forward is “The One Minute Pause.” At its core, the object of the practice is to get quiet and centered by focusing for just one minute, just a couple of times a day. Using a Christian worldview/lens, he prescribes a script that is in keeping with his beliefs.

I have also discovered that the “One Minute Pause” can be adapted and applied in a somewhat different way than Eldredge recommends. In practice, I first focus on naming the people/things that I am anxious, concerned, frustrated, angry about, many of which I have little to no control over, and then transitioning to naming people/things for which I am grateful.

An investment of one minute seems small, almost insignificant, but I see it as a way to “get started.” It has been challenging to build this small discipline into a daily habit, but when I have engaged, I have found it both calming and refreshing. My continued belief is that the stress-reducing self-care strategies we choose need to be “doable,” therefore increasing the likelihood that we will sustain them over time. I hope you will be encouraged to join me in the “One Minute Pause,” however you choose to structure it. —Tom Holahan



## CONGRATULATIONS!

The Together Facing the Challenge team would like to acknowledge Firm Foundation, SAFY of South Carolina, Family Services of America and The Bair Foundation of South Carolina for becoming **certified** in TFTC. We would also like to recognize Easterseals UCP, Children’s Home Society, Crossnore, Family Services of America, Alberta Professional Services, Life Opportunities Therapeutic Services and Omnivisions for becoming **recertified** in TFTC.

## SAVE THE DATE

**TFTC CONFERENCE: October 9, 2020 Mebane Arts Community Center**