

Good Afternoon.....

The following message is from Foxcroft Academy Counseling Services. There is a lot of valuable information for you during this time of uncertainty, Please reach out to any of our counselors should you have any questions or concerns. Enjoy the weekend.

Good afternoon FA parents and guardians,

While I realize that there is a great deal of information coming from all sorts of directions it is important to share the below thoughts, ideas and resources with you in an effort to support you and your child according to our new norms. Several nights ago an email to all FA students was sent from the Counseling Services office. The email outlined ideas to stay busy and the importance of talking about stress at a time like this when so many unknowns are out there, please ask your student to share the contents of that correspondence. The email was *also* sent to remind kids that while we as counselors might not be in the building we are certainly available! In that vein, the counseling services office felt that a similar email, but focused toward the parent, might be helpful. If you have a moment please take a look and if there is anything that we can do to help you or your family please let us know. As a reminder, here is how we divide our caseload:

A-La day students: Kandi Martin kandi.martin@foxcroftacademy.org

Lb-Z day students: Laurie Mallett. laura.mallett@foxcroftacademy.org

Boarding student counselor and school social worker: Karen Smith.
karen.smith@foxcroftacademy.org

Helpful thoughts:

1. Watch for concerns from your child and respond in a non-alarming way.
 - * For non-urgent matters, utilize your child's school counselor or contact the Disaster Distress Helpline at: 1-800-985-5990. Students or adults needing to talk can also text *talkwithus* to 66746. The helpline will get you in touch with a professional who can provide on the spot emotional or mental health counseling related to what's happening with the coronavirus pandemic. This helpline is free, confidential and available 24/7
 - * For urgent matters involve your child's doctor and access resources that can provide immediate intervention such as the Crisis Hotline or authorities.

The Maine Crisis Hotline number is: 1-888-568-1112.

To the extent possible, check-in with your child or children frequently. Often, talking about things can alleviate fear and anxiety and can make a big difference. When your child hears that worry and a healthy fear of the unknown is normal, there will likely be a sense of relief.

2. Know that while you might be sticking to the guidelines of **social distancing** by not allowing your kids to hang out with friends, others, unfortunately, are not. Have a plan on how to address this frustration with your child or if it hasn't happened yet - prepare for the fact that it probably will! Have a response on hand and consider telling your child that they can blame you when talking with friends about their inability to get together and assure them that as soon as safety guidelines allow, plans will be made to meet up with friends! Maybe even talk about what that will look like and start planning a post-COVID 19 celebration (but be prepared to fulfill that promise!)
3. Be cautious of conversations that you have around your children but also be age-appropriate and realistic about the concern. End conversations on a positive note whenever possible.
4. Is there someone your child is worried about? A sick friend who is immunocompromised, an elderly family member, a pregnant friend or relative who is more at risk if she becomes ill? Ask your child if this is a worry of his/hers.
5. Supply your child with reputable sources if he/she wants factual information or you believe that your child would benefit from accessing a reputable source.
 - For the latest from the Maine CDC:
<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/contact-us.shtml>
 - For help working through mental health concerns such as anxiety or depression check out the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):
<https://www.nami.org>
6. Talk with your child - sometimes conversation proves to unearth fears and anxiety that you never considered.

6. Take note of your child's activity level or non-activity level. Set aside time each day where it is expected that they won't be in their room or isolated but allow them to help design that time.

6. Plan family time, call/facetime a relative for a check-in, play games - dig out a deck of cards or dust off the Wii, take walks and include the dog, schedule a movie night, be creative and have a picnic in the car, start baking, make a meal together, design a random act of kindness activity, require your kids to help around the house even if they never have before - kids need to be busy! (Check out the Rainbow activity in Dover Foxcroft)

6. Be aware of your own personal fears, frustration levels etc. Take time when you need time. Kids can usually pick up on parent stress.

6. Continue to have downtime at home but balance it with busy time as well.

6. It may sound silly but move furniture in your living room every few days and allow your child to move his/her furniture. Changing things up provides a feeling of a new space.

6. For parents to seniors - the Class of 2020 is **POTENTIALLY** missing out on major *rites of passage* - prom, spring fling, graduation... so much is unknown with regard to timeframes. Empathize with them and listen. Allow them to be upset but encourage the, *one day at a time* approach!

6. Use caution not to project your financial fears onto the kids but also be age-appropriate when dealing with the reality. Try to keep conversation about money, away from the kids. That being said, it's ok to let kids know that since you or a loved one is out of work or there are too many unknowns, extra expenses have to wait.

6. Do you work during the day? Leave a list of things your kids can do to soak up time: apply for scholarships, write a letter to someone, do something for an elderly family member, write down meal prep for the next few days. If possible, call and check in with your kids while you are at work.

6. Set up time when school work should be the focus and check to be sure it is getting done. Talk about your child's grades and the assignments that they are receiving online. Design your child's school time schedule with him/her or at least talk about it. Allow for flexibility. Your child might not do school work from 8:00-2:00; especially, if they are helping with a sibling during your workday but if the school work is quality and it is getting done, consider it a win!

6. Are you a nurse, medical responder or someone on the front lines? If so, first and foremost, THANK YOU. Second, it's likely that your child is concerned about your risk. Ask if they are worried and talk about it.

6. Be cautious of rumors. Small towns can easily fall victim to rumors - perhaps your child has heard that someone in the district has tested positive for COVID-19. Check the CDC website and ground your conversation with facts. Emphasize the importance of squashing rumors.

6. Finally, for those struggling to make ends meet, don't hesitate to ask for help:
 - Are you behind on bills or fearful that you will be? Many if not most businesses are fielding these calls daily - you are NOT alone! Call the company in question and tell them what you can or can't do for a payment. Even if you think you will be ok with paying bills for a bit, it's ok to call and find out what your options are. Having this information on hand can help to alleviate stress that creeps in if the situation arises. Be proactive.
 - If you are in need of food know that there are many wonderful area food cupboards. The Dover Foxcroft Food Cupboard has an informative Facebook page and recently posted the following info:

Food will be distributed on March 27, April 10 & 25, 10 - noon and 1-3. Recommendations from the CDC are being taken seriously, and the Food Cupboard is making adjustments. Food cupboard distributions will be very similar to commodity food distributions:

1. *Food boxes will be assembled by volunteers, minimizing handling to the extent possible.*
2. *Patrons will remain in their vehicles, and volunteers will load their food.*
3. *First-time patrons will receive food boxes. Pre-registration is never required.*

In closing, please know that we are thinking about you and our students. We miss them terribly and can't wait to get back to normal. We are here to support you and your child in any way that we can. Please email if there is something that you need and if we can't supply the answer we will work hard to find out who can. Please take care.

School Counselors,
Kandi Martin
Laurie Mallett
Karen Smith