

# Berne-Knox-Westerlo

April, 2020



## *A message from your school psychologists!*

### Family Connectedness During COVID-19

Hello BKW families,

This is Emily Wylong, your secondary school psychologist as well as Dr. Katrina Emmerich your elementary school psychologist. For those of you who have not met me (Ms. Wylong) yet, my office is located in the new Counseling Center in the secondary building next to the main office. Currently, I am working from home with my beagle Lily and Dr. Emmerich is at home with her family and Miss. Maggie. Many students and families ask me, “what does a school psychologist do.” As the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) states, “they apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally” (NASP, 2019). Additionally, I enjoy connecting with families, teachers, administrators and other community providers to create safe and supportive learning environments. School psychologists wear many hats throughout the day. My current role is supporting all BKW students and families during this COVID-19 pandemic. Students of all ages may be engaging in many different emotions such as feeling confused, anxious, nervous, worried, sad, scared, and unsure about the future. Families are experiencing these emotions together as well as our BKW teachers and staff. *We are the BKW community.* We have the **Best Kids in the World**. Our BKW families and families around the world are trying to adapt to these new changes. Children and youth look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. Parents have taken on the role of teacher, while trying to figure out their families routines and creating a new normal. I encourage families to engage in downtime, family time, self care, and broaden your definition of learning. I have included a list of activities for students and their families to do together. This is a time to learn new skills, develop healthy habits, learn something new, and connect with family and friends. Below are many different ways that families can connect with each other during this time of quarantine and suggestions on how to support your children during this unprecedented time.

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## Monitor Screen Time/Social Media

- Families should monitor what their children are watching on TV as well as monitor social media usage. Everyone is talking about COVID-19. Most reports on TV are not age appropriate for our young bulldogs. Watching the continued reports on the pandemic can cause an array of emotions such as fear, anxiety and confusion. If children and youth ask parents and caregivers questions about what they have been hearing from others or the media, tell them facts that are age appropriate. Talk to your children about the facts and ask what they know. They may be hearing inaccurate information. Children should know what is going on but providing appropriate facts will decrease the fear and anxiety. Let them know that there are so many helpers that are working hard.
- Some children and youth may want to be on social media more than usual in order to stay in touch with their friends who they are used to seeing in school. Allow time after school work is completed for them to speak with friends online in safe ways. Using online video chats like google meets, zoom, facetime or skype can allow students to engage in those social interactions.
- Take a break from social media!! There are many free educational, mindfulness and fitness apps for all ages available. Please see this link for 15 Mindfulness and Relaxation Apps for Kids: <https://parentingchaos.com/anxiety-apps-kids/>



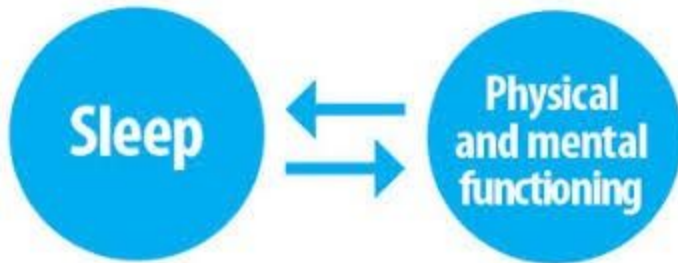
## Sleep Hygiene

- During times of stress, sleep may be negatively affected. Sleep is critical to your physical health and mental health. This pandemic has disrupted the daily routines of all families. It can be hard to keep track of the time when you're stuck in the house all day. Excess screen time, worry, anxieties, work loads, can be affecting sleep patterns as well.
- Sleep is important because it can strengthen the immune system. The immune system helps fight off illnesses. Getting enough sleep supports a healthy mind, supports decision making, memory, and improves our ability to absorb information when

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learning. In general, getting a good night's sleep makes us feel better physically, mentally, and emotionally.

- It is important to create a schedule for sleep. Please see the link below for ways to obtain a better night's sleep.



<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-guidelines-covid-19-isolation>

## Social Emotional Learning

- It may be hard to manage emotions during this time. As expressed previously, children, youth and families may experience many different emotions. There are students and families who have pre-existing mental health disorders or prior traumatic experiences who may be having more difficulty during this time. It is important to practice self care, engage with families and connect with family and friends.
- If you or your family would like to speak with a counselor about the COVID-19 virus or related stress, please contact the Counseling Department at **518-872-1482**, Option 3. You can also email your school counselors, social worker, or school psychologists. Below are links to emotional support hotlines as well as counseling resources that the BKW counseling team put together. There is also a link provided by NASP.



## Emotional Support Hotlines

<https://www.bkwschools.org/emotional-support-hotlines/>

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## Counseling resources for the BKW school community

<https://www.bkwschools.org/counseling-resources-for-the-bkw-school-community-on-covid-19/>

## Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>

## Family Time

- This is the time to have conversations with your children about anything. Children and youth may ask parents and family members about COVID-19. Listen to what they have to say and provide facts based on the child's age. Let them know that as a family, they are doing everything in their power to keep everyone safe and healthy.
- Students may be using extra screen time in order to complete their school work. Now is the time to step away from those screens and engage in activities together. There are so many activities families can do. Puzzles, board games (even some family video games), going for a walk with each other, garden and yard work, spring cleaning, redesign/organize the house, have a picnic in your yard, try a new hobby, movie nights, cook a new meal, yoga, exercise using a free app/youtube or have a dance party, read a good book, craft, go through everyone's clothes that you can donate, indoor scavenger hunt, and many more!
- Family time can mean different things to different families. It is all about being together, supporting each other, and connecting.
- Please look at the following links for what children and teens can do with siblings or others to keep themselves busy during quarantine.



<https://www.wsisd.com/ourpages/users/dcoyle/Coronavirus/Extended%20Learning>

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[\*/Stay%20at%20Home%20Care%20package Things%20I%20Can%20Do%20with%20Sibling%20Teen.jpg\*](#)

[\*https://www.wsisd.com/ourpages/users/dcoyle/Coronavirus/Extended%20Learning/I m%20Bored%20Sibling.pdf\*](#)

## **Self-Care**

- Practicing self-care is a great way to take your mind off the changes that are happening in the world and in your community. Self-care can be very stress relieving as well. Self-care means different things for everyone. It can simply mean spending time with loved ones and having a family meal. Families can take a mindful minute throughout the day, engage in stress free activities, or engage in separate self-care activities.
- Please review the links below for self care ideas.

### ***Indoor Games and Activities to get Children Moving***

[\*https://www.wsisd.com/ourpages/users/dcoyle/Coronavirus/Extended%20Learning/Stay%20at%20Home%20Care%20package Indoor%20Games.pdf\*](#)

### ***Indoor Activities for Teens***

[\*https://www.wsisd.com/ourpages/users/dcoyle/Coronavirus/Extended%20Learning/Stay%20at%20Home%20Care%20Package%20Indoor%20Teen.pdf\*](#)

### ***Things That I Can Do By Myself***

[\*https://www.wsisd.com/ourpages/users/dcoyle/Coronavirus/Extended%20Learning/I m%20Bored%20-%20By%20Myself.pdf\*](#)

### ***30 Day Lego Challenge***

[\*https://www.wsisd.com/ourpages/users/dcoyle/Coronavirus/Extended%20Learning/thumbnail IMG 8147.jpg\*](#)

### **Mindfulness and Self-Care**

[\*https://sites.google.com/bkwschools.org/bkw-school-counseling/mindfulness-and-self-care?authuser=0\*](#)



### School Connections/Virtual Learning

- Family-school connections are very important during this virtual learning change. Let your children understand that this is not a summer vacation. Students will be learning everyday along with their peers and like many students throughout the state and country. This new virtual learning/home based learning is new for ALL of us. For those households that do not have internet access, students should be working on the work that teachers mail home. If any parent needs support with your students' school work or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the teachers. Teachers, administrators, related services providers, counselors, school social worker and school psychologists are here for families. We will get through this together, learn together and grow together as a BKW community. Lately, I have been telling the high school students that this is great practice if they end up taking an online college course or an online program. Teachers and staff are learning new ways of teaching and parents are learning a new way of parenting.
- Please go to the BKW district webpage to see what resources you can get for your child and for updates. <https://www.bkwschools.org/>



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Stay safe and healthy and we hope to see everyone soon.

*Ms. Wylong & Dr. Emmerich*