



# St Catherine of Siena

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## NEWSLETTER

Term 2, Week 4

May 8th 2020

### Family Week Reflection

This year the theme for Family Week is "Building Connections in the Spirit of Hope" This is particularly relevant to us this year as we practise Social Distancing and Isolation; our thoughts on what family means to you may have changed. Perhaps you have been spending more time together; or perhaps you have been isolated from your family. Either way, may the Spirit of Hope comfort you and lead you to strengthen and build on the connections in your family and beyond.

We pause to reflect on our school community – the children, staff, ourselves as parents and other carers, and the volunteers, who all contribute to make our school what it is. God of all faithfulness, you came to be part of our human family. You weave together the different strands of the journeys of each family in our school. May the pattern created here be a witness to your goodness. Be with each of our families – of each staff member and volunteer, as well as each family whose children are in the school. Show us how to stand by each other and give generously; How to trust and be loyal, laugh and cry, live and love, together. God of compassion, strengthen us and be with us on our journey always. Amen



Dear Parents & Guardians,

Who would have thought that this time last year, we would all be working or learning from home? The two words "social isolation", something we would barely have put together let alone be living is now our everyday reality. Yet here we are, over a month into it, and I still continue to hear people finding the positives in what is certainly a very challenging time. The necessary isolation and restrictions put in place to limit the effects of COVID-19 have provided us an opportunity to reflect and the time to reevaluate what is important and why our relationships with others are so important. As parents, you will be conflicted with a range of emotions and issues and many of you will be grappling with the dual roles of working from home and supervising remote learning.

I wish to share with you an article a colleague shared with me recently that was written by Rebecca Branstetter, a school psychologist. I encourage you to read it, as I am hoping it will resonate with you, as it has with me and bring some reassurance that under the circumstances, you are all doing an amazing job.

### How to Reduce the Stress of Home Schooling on Everyone

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_to\\_reduce\\_the\\_stress\\_of\\_homeschooling\\_on\\_everyone](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_reduce_the_stress_of_homeschooling_on_everyone)

A school psychologist offers advice to parents on how to support their child during school closures. By Rebecca Branstetter April 21, 2020

With nationwide school closures in effect, many parents are now monitoring home-schooling while at the same time trying to make a living in the midst of a terrible economic crisis. In this environment of broken routine and uncertainty, chances are your child is showing big feelings and challenging behaviours.

In my work as a school psychologist, I've been hearing from parents that despite their best efforts, their children are struggling with meeting home-school expectations. Kids who never showed behavioural or emotional challenges are experiencing issues, and kids who had some struggles before are showing an uptick of challenges. Here are three ways to support your child (and manage your own stress) during school closures that parents I work with have found helpful.

#### 1. Simplify: Relax your home schooling and productivity standards to a level appropriate for a worldwide pandemic

If you're a parent suddenly trying to balance remote work and home schooling, your household might look a bit like mine right now. As I am writing this, I am also toggling back and forth between helping my third-grader with Google Classroom, trying to set up my kindergartener for some independent writing work, and fielding questions every few seconds (wait, what is the difference between scalene and isosceles triangles again?!?).

I've come to realize in these past few weeks that being super productive with my work as a school psychologist AND giving full attention to home schooling my children is not possible right now. Turns out, being a parent, teacher, and school psychologist are three different jobs that cannot all be done well at the same time.

Spending time wishing things were otherwise is an exercise in frustration. And since research shows that acceptance is an important trait in positive well-being, here are a few mantras about simplification you might want to try:

- I am not home schooling. I am doing my best to help my kids learn at home during a crisis.
- I am not "working from home." I am doing my best to work at home during a crisis.
- I cannot be as productive as normal because these are not normal times. I will focus on what I can accomplish in just the next 24 hours and let go of what I cannot accomplish right now.

Research shows that gratitude is another way to cultivate well-being. Even in challenging times, there is an opportunity to be grateful and to be accepting of what you can and cannot accomplish in a crisis. Here's one simple strategy for you and your family members to start your day: Say, write, or draw (if your child is young) one thing you're grateful for, one thing to do, and one thing to let go of or accept.

Putting gratitude at the front of your day will set a positive tone for the day. And while you undoubtedly have more than one thing to do, focusing on ONE important task and letting go of impossible standards will keep you from feeling like you are falling short every day.

## 2. Structure: Keep calm and structure on

If you Google "How to support my child during COVID-19," the top advice is to stick to a regular schedule, even when you're all at home all day. There's good reason for this. For adults and kids alike, routine and predictability are calming during times of stress. If you've tried to set a schedule and your children are resisting it, here are some reminders:

- *Now is not the time to clamp down and control your child's day. Now is the time to collaborate with your child on a schedule that works for the whole family.*
- *It is okay if your schedule does not go to plan every day. Every day is an opportunity to fine-tune what is working and eliminate what is not working.*
- *Your job as a parent is not to recreate an eight-hour school day. Your job is to help your child feel safe and do their best with the distance learning plan the teachers have provided.*

It's worth reiterating that you do not have to recreate a full school-day schedule! Your family schedule may look more like what you would create over a summer break, including opportunities for fun, exercise, hands-on learning activities, and family connection. It is also important to build in "emotional checkpoints" during the day and involve your child in the schedule.

## 3. Support: Get ahead of the meltdowns (and teach critical social-emotional skills, too!)

When our children are experiencing big feelings, they may communicate them through behaviour. If your child is melting down over something that seems small to you, it may be a sign they are overwhelmed or flooded with emotions.

For instance, when my kindergartner fell into a puddle of tears and screamed at me because she didn't like the word-sorting activity that her teacher gave her to do, it wasn't really about the sorting activity. After she calmed down using her "Calming Menu" we had created earlier (hugging the dog is her go-to), she ended up sharing that she was sad because she missed her friends. Had I clamped down on compliance on the assignment, it would have been a missed opportunity for her to practice calming down and expressing her emotions.

The important takeaway message here is that children (and, indeed, adults!) do not have access to their thinking and reasoning skills when they are flooded with emotions. If your child cannot focus on school tasks, or you are seeing them melt down, tantrum, or withdraw, it's likely because they are having a hard time meeting an expectation while under stress.

The antidote? Empathy. Research shows that empathy can calm the nervous system and re-engage the thinking and reasoning side of the brain. When you are in the middle of a meltdown, you might remind yourself of this using the following mantras:

- *My child is not giving me a hard time; they are having a hard time.*
- *Behaviour is communication, and my child is "telling" me they need support.*
- *The teachable moment about behavioural expectations is never in the "hot" moment. I must calm my child through empathy first.*

The reality is, your job right now as a home schooling parent is less about academics, and more about creating safety, belonging, and acceptance. Your kids can learn about academics from teachers. The most important skill you can teach is how to manage big feelings under stress. Here are some techniques that may be helpful in teaching critical emotional-regulation skills:

- *Develop a list of calming strategies BEFORE you and your children need them. Post them on your fridge where all family members can readily use them.*
- *For research-based and easy-to-do connection activities that teach social-emotional skills, visit Greater Good in Education and pick a few to try with your family.*
- *Get support yourself by picking one self-care practice on the Greater Good in Action website so you can parent from a place of calm and model for your child how to solve problems together. Kids learn by watching us, so taking care of yourself is teaching your child how to cope.*

Therefore...

The staff and I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all families for supporting us in what we have put in place for Remote Learning. We know that the children have been doing their very best to complete tasks, stay engaged and be "at school" while at home and that parents and carers have supervised, offered support and encouragement and assisted when children were unsure of what to do. We acknowledge that it is hugely challenging and have taken note of feedback you have sent through, on the recently sent out surveys, on what these challenges are and how we could make it better for you and your child. Video chats and conferences in real time commenced with the senior students this week and will be rolled out to other classes as soon as possible.

Have a good weekend, stay safe and God bless.



Carmel Marantelli  
**PRINCIPAL**

## What is SEL and why is it important?

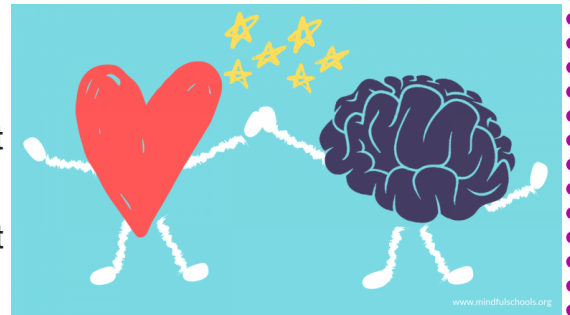
Teachers and students will often talk about SEL. This stands for Social and Emotional learning and it is all about keeping your mind in the best possible state so that you can be the best that you can be. At school, your child learns about being responsible for their actions, goal setting, making good choices and being resilient. They are some of the core areas of SEL at school.

At home SEL is just as important - particularly during this COVID-19 pandemic. Social-emotional learning is critical to managing anxiety at this time:

"Because if you don't know how to deal with the lack of control of your future, or the feelings of uncertainty that you're having, your brain is going to stay in a constant fight or flight mode," he said. "And if our brain is in fight or flight mode, then it's not in learning mode." (Marc Brackett, Yale University)

## Some SEL things to try at home with your child

- Breathing and Mindfulness exercises
- A calm down space - away from the learning space
- Talking about feelings
- Drawing pictures about how we feel
- Start a journal - of hopes, dreams or the things that you're grateful for
- Worry Jar - write down what is worrying you and 'get rid of it' in your jar - 'let it go'



## Contact Details

During this time of remote learning it is extremely important to keep contact details up to date, in particular phone numbers and email addresses. If you have had a change to your contact details please inform the school and also update your Caremonkey account.

## Caremonkey eForms

All families have been sent an eform permission for students to participate in video conferencing with their teacher. This is an important way of connecting and enhancing learning at home. Eforms must be signed before students can join video conference calls. Please ensure you are checking your emails regularly and respond to all Caremonkey notices and permissions as soon as possible.



## Parish Of Melton Office

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Office Open: Tuesday - Friday 9am - 3pm

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

As of 19th March 2020 **ALL MASSES** (including Sunday services) have been SUSPENDED until further notice due to the COVID-19 direction issued by The Bishops of the Province of Victoria. We will continue to provide updates via the Parish website and Parish Facebook page as they become available.

w: <http://pol.org.au/melton/Home>

 Parish Facebook Page

 Parish Instagram Page

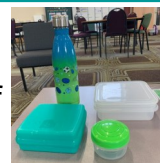


## Uniform Shop

We have had many inquiries about the Uniform Shop. This is closed at the moment however if you have a need for items urgently please send an email through to [info@scmeltonwest.catholic.edu.au](mailto:info@scmeltonwest.catholic.edu.au) and we will see what we can do to assist you.

## Lost Property

We have a number of containers that were left at school at the end of Term 1. If any of the items pictured belong to you please contact the school on 9743 2166.



# 2021 Prep Enrolments

## **2021 Enrolments are now OPEN!**

### **Do you have a child starting Prep in 2021??**

Email [office@scmeltonwest.catholic.edu.au](mailto:office@scmeltonwest.catholic.edu.au) or click the link [here](#) to request an enrolment pack.

When lodging an application copies of your child's Birth certificate, Immunisation certificate, Baptism certificate and signed Parent-School Code of Conduct must be attached along with any VISA or legal documents if these are applicable.



All siblings of current students as well as all new applicants are required to have an enrolment application lodged. Once restrictions have been lifted you will also be required to attend an enrolment interview with our Principal Carmel Marantelli and our Parish Priest Fr Michael Moody.

## Term 2, 2020

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
11 Week 5	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 Week 6	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 Week 7	26	27 *National Simultaneous Storytime	28	29	30	31
1 June Week 8	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Week 9 Queens Birthday	9	10	11	12	13	14