

Pathway 1: Work as a Family to Support Your Child's School Participation



Pathway 1:

Work as a family to support your child's school participation.

This pathway is right for you if:

- You plan to keep your child in their current school.
- Your child will participate in remote learning from your home and only with other children from your household.
- You want to make remote and hybrid learning and transitions between in-person and remote school more manageable.
- You want to improve how your child learns at home and build your child's ownership over learning.
- You want to address your child's unmet academic, social, and emotional learning needs.
- You prefer to manage your child's learning without other adults, except through the school.

This pathway made sense for my family. It helped me find ways to support my child academically and help him stay connected with kids his age while learning at home.



I chose this pathway to help my child stay focused and engaged during remote learning and to make the transition between at home and in-person school days easier.



Pathway 1: Work as a family to support your child's school participation



Set-up and Routines Checklist

These steps help you create a safe, consistent learning environment for your child. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 🤔.

😊 🤔 **Schedule**

- Work with your child to create a learning schedule.
- Find the right supervision structure.
- Track progress throughout the day.
- Establish strong routines.
- Prepare for interruptions and mishaps.
- Plan free-time activities.

😊 🤔 **Learning Space**

- Find a space that is comfortable and relatively distraction-free.
- Prepare the space.

😊 🤔 **Digital Access and Safety**

- Ensure that your child has a stable and strong Internet connection.
- Ensure that your child has a device.
- Make sure your child can use online learning platforms.
- Talk with your child about digital safety.
- Use parental controls to set boundaries.
- Monitor your child's online activity.



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Learning and Growing Checklist

These steps help you engage your child in instruction and support your child's learning and growth. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 Learning Materials

- Get a sense of what your child is learning.
- Select materials to support your child's learning as needed.

😊 😊 Learning Support

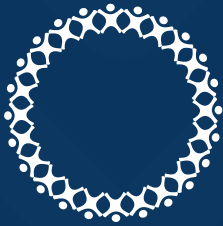
- Coordinate with other caregivers who supervise your child.
- Understand and prevent distraction.
- Build in screen-time breaks.
- Create ways for your child to communicate with you during the day.
- Provide genuine, specific, and positive feedback.
- Familiarize yourself with the grade-level standards and content.
- Talk and read to your child in your home language.
- Talk about your child's strengths, interests, and challenges.
- Work with your child's school to monitor attendance, engagement, and learning progress.
- Communicate questions and needs as they come up.

😊 😊 Enrichment Activities

- Encourage your child to explore their interests.
- Learn with your child.
- Visit parks and local cultural sites.
- Help your child volunteer.
- Help your child safely participate in school-based extracurriculars.
- Encourage your child to participate in extracurriculars outside school.



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Community and Connection Checklist

These steps help you and your child establish and support meaningful relationships. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 Socialization

- Have fun as a family.
- Help your child make others feel welcome.
- Form study groups.
- Help your child participate in class.
- Coordinate virtual meetups.
- Join a club or class.
- Plan safe, in-person meetups.

😊 😊 Support Systems

- Connect with families at your school.
- Connect with families in your child's class.
- Join groups of families with children with similar learning needs.
- Celebrate joyful moments.

😊 😊 Mental and Emotional Health

- Have fun, play, and celebrate.
- Check in with your child about how they are feeling.
- Look for downturns in your child's emotional health.
- Help your child identify their strengths and manage frustration and anxiety.
- Incorporate mindfulness.



Work as a family to support your child's school participation



Set-up and Routines

A positive and consistent setting helps your child learn from home and transition between in-person and remote schooling.



Schedule

Having a regular schedule—with time for focused learning, breaks, and fun and engaging enrichment activities (including family time)—can help your child feel prepared, confident, and ready to learn each day.

Work with Your Child to Create a Learning Schedule.

Review your child's remote or hybrid schedule each week. Put class times and other synchronous (real-time) activities on [weekly](#) and [daily](#) schedules. Add other activities, including times for lunch, snacks, breaks, play, physical activity, independent reading (as appropriate), and recreation. Check to make sure the schedule works for your child and for your other responsibilities (e.g., work shifts).

- When possible, alternate between challenging and less challenging activities. Schedule challenging subjects at times when your child is most alert.
- Include [key routines](#) in your schedule that provide additional structure, including for [children with ADHD](#) and [toddlers and preschoolers](#).
- If your child shares a device with other family members, note when your child will be using the device.

Find the Right Supervision Structure.

The level of supervision your child requires depends on a number of factors, including their age and needs and how often they attend school in person. Younger children may do better with an adult or older sibling who can assist with schoolwork throughout the day. Older children may require only occasional check-ins during the day and longer check-ins in the evenings and on weekends.

- Your family's childcare plan might include multiple caregivers depending on the day of the week or time of day. Create consistent day-to-day and week-to-week arrangements to help your child know what to expect.

Track Progress Throughout the Day.

Help older children stay organized with a digital schedule. For younger children, use a paper schedule so they can see and track their progress using checkboxes, Post-it notes, or stickers.

- For children who are not reading or with [special learning needs](#), consider alternatives to a written schedule. For example, you might create a schedule out of objects that represent each part of your child's day. Have your child move objects from a To-Do box to a Done box as they complete tasks.

Establish Strong Routines.

Routines provide a helpful structure to the day, so everyone is on the same page.

- Begin and end the school day with set activities. Use these times to connect with your child in a fun or relaxed way—playing outside, going for a walk, playing a game.
- Use transition routines to move from one activity to the next and to help younger children take on more independence. These routines may include putting away materials, preparing for the next activity, noting any incomplete tasks, checking in with an adult, stretching, moving, and taking a break. Consider helping your child set up signals for when a transition is approaching (a five-minute warning alarm, for example).
- Talk to your child about what questions require the immediate help of an adult and which questions can be saved for a check-in. Consider creating a "question catcher" (a separate notebook) for your child to keep track of questions while learning.



Schedule

Having a regular schedule—with time for focused learning, breaks, and fun and engaging enrichment activities (including family time)—can help your child feel prepared, confident, and ready to learn each day.

Prepare for Interruptions and Mishaps.

At some point, the link for remote learning won't work or the Wi-Fi will be weak. By talking about these and other challenges that might occur and having a backup plan (like an activity from [Wide Open School](#)), your child can more independently manage hiccups and interruptions.

Plan Free-Time Activities.

For younger children, create a “choice box” with developmentally appropriate activities (books, toys, coloring books). For older children, help them identify free-time options at the start of each day and week.

Learning Space

Having a set space for learning can help create a sense of comfort and help your child better engage in school when learning from home.

Find a Space That Is Comfortable and Relatively Distraction-Free.

Look for an area that has good light and is as free from distractions (music, t.v.) as possible. The space doesn't have to be permanent—carving a corner out of a shared room for your child to use while learning can work just fine. Your child may prefer to move from space to space throughout the day, using a sign or other marker to indicate they are working.

- Check how the background appears on video. If you prefer not to share the background, use a virtual background (available on [Google Meet](#) and [Zoom](#)) or [Google Meet's blur feature](#).

Prepare the Space.

Encourage your child to decorate the learning space and add personal touches so that it feels comfortable and fun.

- Gather books and supplies, including stress relievers (like a fidget spinner).
- If your child has special learning needs, contact the school to understand what special accommodations were provided in the school building and how best to ensure similar supports are provided at home.



Digital Access and Safety

To connect to remote learning, your child needs (1) a stable and strong Internet connection, (2) a personal device (a laptop or other device), and (3) an understanding of how to access remote-learning programming and actively participate.

Ensure That Your Child Has a Stable and Strong Internet Connection.

If you need help connecting to the Internet, contact your district or city to see if they can provide a Wi-Fi hotspot. If your internet is not stable, ask your child's teacher about alternative ways of engaging with class content (through recorded videos of class, phone check-ins, printed materials, and virtual office hours).

- [Everyoneon](#) helps families find low-cost Internet options.

Ensure That Your Child Has a Device.

Many schools and districts provide devices for home use and technology support. If your child has questions or the device malfunctions, [contact your school's technology support staff](#).

- If your child is sharing a device with others, make a schedule to show who is using the device at what time.

Make Sure Your Child Can Use Online Learning Platforms.

[Tour learning platforms](#) with your child so that they feel comfortable using these systems independently. Your child may already be familiar with these platforms, so let them guide you.

- Use a [password manager](#) so that your child and all caregivers can access multiple learning platforms.
- If your child has special learning needs, there are [actions you can take](#) to improve your child's experience with remote learning. Reach out to your child's school about any [accessible instructional materials](#) your child needs to participate in learning. This may include universal accessibility features (e.g., closed captioning) that can be activated on digital learning platforms.

Talk with Your Child about Digital Safety.

- Use age-appropriate [online games and videos](#) to help your child understand digital safety terms (like cyberbullying and virus protection).
- Remind your child to never give out their personal information—including their name, address, and phone number—to anyone over e-mail or social media.

Use Parental Controls to Set Boundaries.

These [controls](#) can filter and block harmful content and prevent your child from sharing personal information online.

Monitor Your Child's Online Activity.

Look at what learning and [social media](#) platforms your child is accessing and what is communicated on them. Pay particular attention to [signs of cyberbullying](#). Speak with your child about how to make responsible decisions about online communication, including the consequences of posting content that is unkind or mean.



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to create a safe, consistent learning environment for my child?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

Work as a family to support your child's school participation



Learning and Growing

Helping your child learn can take many shapes, from hands-on support and problem-solving challenges to playing and having fun.



Learning Materials

Strong learning materials can support your child’s learning and growth, particularly when your child is in remote school for some or all of the time.

Get a Sense of What Your Child is Learning.

Before choosing additional learning programs and materials, [take time to understand what your child is learning](#) through school and how your child is doing.

- Use state family guides ([K-12](#)) to learn more about the learning standards and foundational skills your child is expected to master. State guides (for example, [Connecticut Parent Guides](#)) can give you a sense of the content and skills your child is expected to learn.
- Make sure your child’s curriculum for core subjects (English, math, and science) meets your state’s [learning standards](#).
 - » To know if a school is using a high-quality core curriculum, see how the learning materials are rated on [EdReports](#). In addition, see if the content helps your child move from simpler to more complex skills, instead of being presented in a pick-and-choose format.
- [Talk with your child’s teachers](#) about how they are teaching the standards and how your child is doing. [Ask grade-specific questions](#) to identify skills to target with your child.
- Follow your child’s progress using online tools, including [Learning Heroes Readiness Check](#) (K–8, reading and math).

Select Materials to Support Your Child’s Learning as Needed.

Supplemental learning materials are not intended to replace in-school materials. They are designed to help your child fill in gaps, further develop skills, and explore their interests. They are typically designed to be completed on a flexible schedule, and many include highly engaging games and other activities.



Some supplemental programs you may consider include:

Multiple Subjects			
UNBOXED by Prepared Parents	4-9	Free	UNBOXED by Prepared Parents (available in English and Spanish) provides a monthly toolkit for families that supports academic learning and helps children develop habits and skills for lifelong success.
Khan Academy	K-12	Free	Khan Academy offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside the classroom. Subjects include math, science, computing, history, art history, and economics, plus K-14 and test preparation (SAT, Praxis, LSAT) content.
Wide Open School	PK-12	Free	Wide Open School provides free learning activities for all grades.
Outschool	PK-12	Costs vary by class (financial support available)	Outschool offers live, small-group video classes taught by educators, artists, scientists, and others. Courses range from beginning reading to AP physics to video game design to piano.
Math			
Teach to One Roadmaps Home	4-8, Algebra 1	\$9.95 per month	Roadmaps Home uses diagnostic assessments to generate a personalized road map for your child. It identifies grade-level math skills to master and links to lessons to develop those skills.
DreamBox	K-8	\$12.95 per month	DreamBox is a digital math program with interactive lessons that your child can use at home. (Available in English and Spanish.)
Prodigy	K-8	Free	Prodigy provides math games that your child can use to practice math at home.
XtraMath	K-6	Free	XtraMath helps students develop quick recall and fluency with basic math.
English Language Arts			
CommonLit	3-12	Free	With a guardian account , caregivers can choose reading lessons from any literary or nonfiction genre and track their child's progress on reading and writing skills.
Story Mentors	PK-2	Free	StoryMentors supports reading with access to resources like children's books and guides.
Springboard Collaborative	K-2	Free	Springboard Collaborative features a four-week learn-at-home plan, including a reading strategy of the week (by video), tip sheets in English and Spanish, daily lessons, and corresponding e-books.
Reading A-Z	K-6	\$115.45 per year	Reading A-Z provides a library of downloadable books, lessons, units, and assessments.
Epic	K-6	\$7.99 per year (1 month free)	Epic includes a library of digital books personalized to your child's age and reading level, and it provides information about your child's reading habits.



Using and Adapting Core Curriculum

Some families support learning by adapting a strong school-based curriculum for use at home. If you do, look for curricula that cover all state learning standards and help your child move to more challenging skills.

Some highly rated curriculum providers have made standards-aligned teacher and student materials available online.

Math

Strong math curriculum options include:

Zearn

(Kindergarten through 5th grade)

Illustrative Mathematics

(6-8, [Algebra 1](#), [Geometry](#), [Algebra 2](#))

SchoolKit

provides additional [key lessons](#) to support learning major work for grades 6-8.

English

Strong English curriculum options include:

EL Education

([K-2](#))

CKLA

([K-5](#))

Odell High School Literacy Program

([9-12](#))

Science

NextGenScience has identified quality [science lessons and units](#) intended for teachers to use in a classroom. If you have the time and interest, you could adapt these for use at home.

Consider using [Learning in Places's](#) family resources to apply science principles at home.

The **Council of State Science Supervisors** has prepared a list of [science home learning activities](#).



Learning Support

Caring and invested adults help children learn, stay focused and motivated, and celebrate success.

To help your child stay focused and engaged while learning:

Coordinate with Other Caregivers Who Supervise Your Child.

If others supervise your child during the day, share your child's school schedule, including class times and login information. Make sure all caregivers can access the digital platforms your child uses for learning (for example, [Google Classroom](#)). Communicate about what work your child has completed and any tasks that remain at the end of each day.

Understand and Prevent Distraction.

Talk with your child about what causes them to become distracted. Work together to find [strategies and routines](#) that address key causes.

- Find what motivates your child and [learn from the advice of teachers of the year](#) on helping children stay focused while learning at home. Include breaks and time for play after challenging activities to reward your child's hard work. Create goals with your child to help them build stamina and maintain focus. Make time for special activities, and recognize and celebrate moments when your child demonstrates greater independence.

Build in Screen-Time Breaks.

Staring at a screen all day is hard. Reading a physical book, taking handwritten notes, or writing a draft of an essay on paper may help your child feel more engaged. Encourage your child to get fresh air at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Create Ways for Your Child to Communicate with You During the Day.

Identify times when it is best for your child to ask you questions. If you work from home, create a communication notebook where your child can write questions and you can respond.

Provide Genuine, Specific, and Positive Feedback.

Recognize [growth](#) and small steps in the right direction, and praise hard work, following directions, and staying on task.

Familiarize Yourself with the Grade-Level Standards and Content.

Use family guides ([K-12](#)) to identify key learning goals and to access practical, everyday strategies and resources to reinforce learning at home.

Talk and Read to Your Child in Your Home Language.

Use your home language when talking with your child about assignments and reading together. By learning in your child's home language, they will be better able to transfer new skills to English.

- [Colorín Colorado](#) provides an array of tools for learning in Spanish and English.



Learning Support

To strengthen your partnership with your child's school and teachers:

Talk About Your Child's Strengths, Interests, and Challenges.

Send an [introductory email](#) to new teachers, and let current teachers know you want to work together to support your child. Include information about your child's strengths, interests, and needs. Tell your child's teacher how and when it's best to contact you, and ask your child's teacher how they prefer to be contacted.

- Actively look for areas in which your child is struggling. Use tools (such as this [Learning Heroes' Readiness Check](#) for grades K–8) to assess your child's learning and get connected to skill-specific resources to support learning at home. Ask your child about what work is hard for them. Make sure academic challenges are communicated to your child's teachers, counselors, and other support staff. Let your child know that they can reach out for help with academic tasks at any time.
- Have regular check-ins with your child's main teacher to ask and answer questions, plan for the month ahead, and provide feedback on remote and hybrid learning.
- Virtually and in person, children learn well one-on-one and in small groups. Help your child arrange opportunities for small-group and one-on-one support with teachers, and help your child form study groups.

Work with Your Child's School to Monitor Attendance, Engagement, and Learning Progress.

Ask your child's teachers and school how to keep track of attendance and engagement. Make sure you know your child's schedule and how you can support daily and weekly lessons and expectations. [Ask questions](#) to understand how your child's school will support your child and how you can support learning at home.

Communicate Questions and Needs as They Come Up.

Use the email templates below to ask questions and share needs. In most cases, it makes sense to first email your child's teacher. If you're not sure how to proceed next, contact your child's counselor, assistant principal, or principal.

- [You are not receiving communication in the primary language you speak.](#)
- [School and class materials are not in the primary language you speak.](#)
- [Your child needs a device or a stable internet connection.](#)
- [Your child has IEP or 504 needs that make learning from home challenging.](#)
- [Your child is not getting food service or other services or support.](#)
- [The learning goals, standards and content, and key assignments for a class are not clear .](#)
- [You could use additional support understanding your child's class content.](#)
- [Your child could use additional support with a class topic.](#)
- [You are not sure who to contact with a certain question or need .](#)
- [You are concerned about your child's emotional or mental health.](#)
- [You are interested in connecting with other families in your child's class.](#)
- [You notice that a lot of families are experiencing the same challenges.](#)



Enrichment Activities

Engaging in planned activities outside the school day can be fun, motivating, and enriching for you and your child.

Encourage Your Child to Explore Their Interests.

Help your child continue to practice and pursue the things they enjoy, including [drawing and art](#), [cooking](#), sports, music, dance, and other creative activities.

Learn with Your Child.

Join your child in learning something fun and new, such as painting or photography. Play and practice sports together. Encourage your child to teach you a new skill or hobby that they enjoy.

Visit Parks and Local Cultural Sites.

Contact local organizations to find out about virtual group tours. Check out parent social media pages to learn about special events happening in your neighborhood.

Help Your Child Volunteer.

Brainstorm with your child ways to show gratitude and support others. Consider writing notes of appreciation, helping a neighbor with lawn care or other tasks, or [reading with an older adult](#).

Help Your Child Safely Participate in School-Based Extracurriculars.

Talk to your child's teachers and coaches to learn about how your child can continue to participate remotely or safely attend in-person activities.

Encourage Your Child to Participate in Extracurriculars Outside of School.

In addition to doing activities in school, your child may also be able to join community-based and online extracurriculars.

- Reach out to other families through family networks (the PTA, Facebook groups) to find out about opportunities for students to safely have fun and explore outside (in a hiking group, for example).
- [Outschool](#) provides low-cost online classes and clubs led by trained instructors across many interest areas, including art, music, health and wellness, technology, games, and other student interests. Families may also apply for a need-based [\\$300 credit](#) to apply to classes.



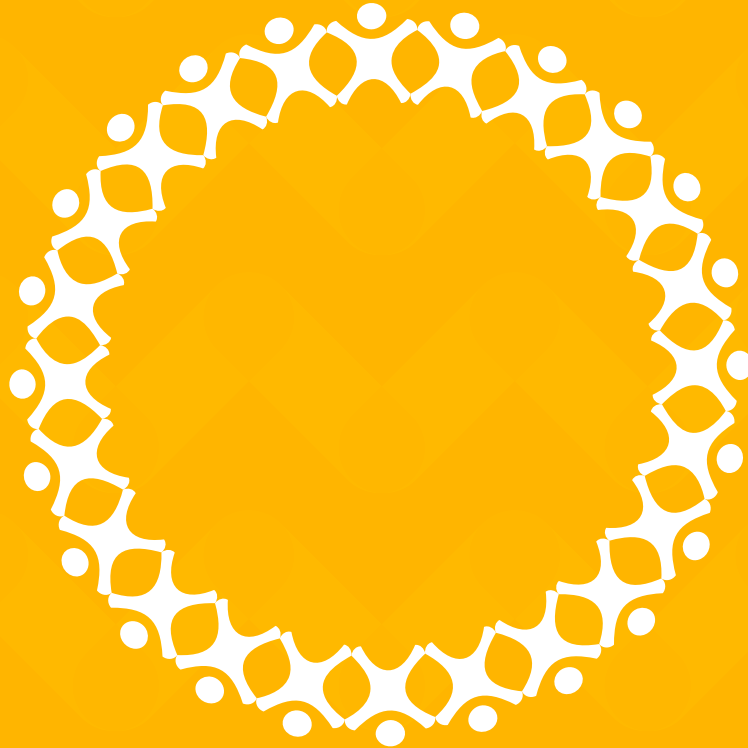
Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to support my child’s learning and growth?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

Pathway 1:

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Community and Connection

Have fun, connect with others, build and maintain relationships, and support your child's personal development and well-being.



Socialization

Enjoy opportunities to work and socialize with others outside school.

Have Fun as a Family.

Play games, watch movies, create art, go on walks, cook, eat, read—take time to turn off devices and connect as a family when not learning.

Help Your Child Make Others Feel Welcome.

Help your child to learn, work, and play with peers who have different backgrounds and interests. [Teach your child to connect with people who are different](#) from them.

- If you are seeking guidance navigating conversations with your child about race and racial justice, there are [resources to help you engage your child in meaningful discussion](#) regardless of their age. PBS KIDS also offers [age-appropriate tips and resources](#) that can help families use books, art, and other media to teach children about race, racism, and being anti-racist.

Form Study Groups.

Working virtually with other students can be a great way for your child to learn, develop social skills, and stay connected with peers.

- If your child is younger, find a classmate to be a study partner (for example, by videoing at the same time every day to practice spelling, math facts, or vocabulary).
- For older children, encourage them to form regular study groups. If your school offers hybrid learning, it can also be helpful for your child to build a relationship with a student who attends class in person when your child learns remotely so that both students can share information and ideas.

Help Your Child Participate in Class.

Synchronous and group learning times provide an opportunity for your child to engage with teachers and peers. Ask your child's teacher how students are expected to participate (by sharing or presenting a piece of work, reading aloud, demonstrating how to solve a problem). Practice presenting over video with family and friends. Provide [sentence stems](#) for your child to look at off-screen to help them participate in academic conversations.

Coordinate Virtual Meetups.

In addition to virtual playdates and video calls, encourage your child to [host a book club](#) or plan a virtual art lesson with friends. ([Udemy](#) offers free online tutorials.) Forming a virtual lunch group can be another way for your child to connect with peers during the day.

Join a Club or Class.

Enroll in an [interest-based club or class online](#) or join a community program ([YMCA](#), [Boys & Girls Clubs of America](#), [Girl Scouts of America](#)).

Plan Safe, In-Person Meetups.

Coordinate with other parents to [agree on safety precautions](#) for any meetups, and follow guidance from local and national health officials (including meeting outdoors where feasible).



Support Systems

Share and learn tips and strategies from other families for making remote learning work, and celebrate what you've done that has worked for you and your child.

Connect with Families at Your School.

Join your local or state [Parent-Teacher Association \(PTA\)](#) and any Facebook groups for families at your child's school.

Connect with Families in Your Child's Class.

[Contact your child's teacher](#) about ways to connect with other families in class. Set up a group conversation (via WhatsApp or Facebook) to share tips, ask questions, and coordinate social activities.

- Contact your school and check social media to find opportunities to connect with families with shared interests or backgrounds (home countries, home languages).

Join Groups of Families with Children with Similar Learning Needs.

Many family groups are organized around supporting children with specific learning needs. To find a group, visit [Bayada](#).

Celebrate Joyful Moments.

Look for what's going well, both big and small. Share what's going well with friends and family. Help your child express gratitude to the caregivers who are supporting them.



Mental and Emotional Health

Supporting your child’s mental and emotional health—and your own, as well—is critical to learning. As a family, make a habit of looking out for and supporting one another in big and little ways.

Have Fun, Play, and Celebrate.

Make time to do the things you and your child enjoy. Exercise and get outdoors. Look for ways to help your child recognize how they are progressing, including by showing greater independence and responsibility.

Check In with Your Child about How They are Feeling.

Talk with your child about [mental and emotional health](#). Ask [open-ended questions](#), model talking about your feelings, and [help your child name and express their emotions](#).

Look for Downturns in Your Child’s Emotional Health.

Some [indications that your child may be struggling emotionally](#) include seeming bored, becoming upset, participating less in class, missing or skipping classes, frequently feeling unwell, and not completing assignments.

- Contact [mental and emotional health specialists](#), including your child’s [school counselors and psychologists](#), if you suspect that your child may be in distress.

Help Your Child Identify Their Strengths and Manage Frustration and Anxiety.

Help your child identify their [character strengths](#). Support your child with unproductive frustration. [Limit the type and amount of media your child consumes](#) and [help your child have accurate information about COVID-19](#).

Incorporate Mindfulness.

Mindfulness education can help you and your child practice techniques to calm the mind and body. Emerging research has shown that it can decrease the negative effects of external stress and increase children’s ability to stay engaged in learning.

- Download a [toolkit](#) to incorporate mindfulness exercises into your day and access easy-to-follow guides.



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to help my child have meaningful relationships with peers and adults?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

If you have questions or feedback on this Family Guide, contact CPRL at cprl@law.columbia.edu or CPRL Executive Director Elizabeth Chu at emc2170@tc.columbia.edu.