

Introducing HomeGrown

During these unprecedented times it is very important for parents to keep in mind children's continued development while being isolated at home. That goes for not only academic development, but children's physical and social-emotional development as well. Covid-19 has turned our world upside-down. As a parent, whether you're working from home or not, you've quickly realized how homeschooling and caring for your children is a full-time job. I have two children at home who are learning virtually every day (8 and 11 years old) and the transition these past few weeks has had its ups and downs. We have not had the same structure, interactions and activity as normal. By this time, most families have access to some sort of academic supports, be it paper copies of materials or full-on virtual learning. Your experience may be different than mine, but in our house having some normalcy with academics has made this transition a little easier. [*If you still need assistance, see the SYB resource page with links to Buffalo Public Schools and other academic sources.*](#)

But there's another facet to the challenges our kids are facing in this new reality and that is a loss of structured supports of any kind. Kids who had routines or receiving physical, mental, or occupational therapy may not be getting those services anymore. You may have seen an array of behaviors out of your children since we began social distancing. Remember that behaviors are the ways in which a child expresses their emotions. My children have had moments of anger, sadness, and verbal aggression. My youngest had a period of regression, where she spoke in baby talk and has been scared to sleep alone. New and challenging behaviors are natural responses during scary times.

We will be starting a weekly blog to help you as parents. The focus will be children's general development (communication and language, fine and gross motor skills, problem-solving, focus and attention) and social-emotional health. "SE" health refers to the ways in which children manage their emotions, interact with others, follow rules, etc. This also includes executive functioning in the brain which relates to how well your child is sleeping and eating. We will post information and links focusing on developmental milestones, as well as fun and easy activities to do at home to continue to promote healthy development. We will provide resources for routines and schedules for your children, coping with big feelings, emotional support, empathy and play, and managing negative behaviors.

Say Yes Buffalo works with Buffalo Public Schools focusing on the social-emotional health of children birth through five years of age, primarily three- and four-year olds. We work closely with the local organization, [Help Me Grow WNY](#). HMGWNY provides free support to families focusing on how children grow and learn. We also work collaboratively with [2-1-1 WNY](#), a hotline and referral resources that provides up-to-date information on local resources for

individuals and families in Ere County. It is our hope to provide you as parents extra support to help your children continue to learn and grow during these uncertain times. Your children may have questions about what is happening with Covid-19 that have been verbally expressed to you, or even behaviorally. You will find some links initially on talking to your child about Coronavirus. Discussing Covid-19, social distancing and use of masks (at an age-appropriate level) with your child can help reduce some anxiety and fear of the unknown.

You may want to consider having a family meeting or discussion and encourage family members to ask questions. It may be helpful to have separate discussions with young children in order to use language they can understand and to address specific fears or misconceptions they may have. My youngest daughter bluntly asked about her own mortality. For elementary school children, we should provide brief, simple information that balances facts with reassurance that adults are actively working to keep our community healthy and will take care of them if they do get sick. As you will read in one of the articles that we will post, "The primary factor in recovery from a traumatic event is the presence of a supportive, caring adult in a child's life. Even when a parent is not available, children can benefit greatly from care provided by other adults (e.g., foster parents, relatives, friends) who can offer them consistent, sensitive care that helps protect them from a pandemic's harmful effects."