

December 2020



# Island County Parent to Parent Newsletter

We will continue to follow the Governor's directive on phased openings of our communities.  
Stay Healthy, Stay Connected

## Celebrations during COVID—New Takes on Old Traditions

While the traditional feast, end-of-year parties, and crowded tables are on hold, there are still fulfilling ways to enjoy the holidays with family and friends.

**Giving thanks** | In a year filled with challenges, it can feel good to pause and consider the things for which we are grateful, whether that be a person, pet, place or thing. Highlight these bright spots by writing them down or sending notes, texts or emails to people in your life to express why you are grateful for them.

**On-screen get togethers** | Sure, it won't be quite the same, but scheduling a few virtual holiday gatherings can take the sting out of being separated. Getting together online to cook, open gifts, decorate desserts, do a craft project, listen to a playlist, or read stories can create a bit of the togetherness we crave. Consider time zones when scheduling, and make sure that any people who are not tech-savvy get help beforehand so they can be included.

**Secret gift exchange** | Assign each family or friend a name, and ask them mail or do a no-contact delivery of a small gift they make or buy to their assigned person. Open gifts on a group video chat and try to guess who gave what to whom.

**Play dress-up** | If you have a willing crowd, create a theme for your virtual party. Themed masks, silly hats or ugly sweaters can give everyone something to laugh & talk about.

**Remote potluck** | Rather than getting together, you can assign dishes to friends and family and deliver them to one another's homes. Or deliver just the ingredients for a dish or meal. Then, log in to your favorite video chat app to cook or dig in.

**Learn a recipe together** | Haven't you always thought Nonna deserves a cooking show? Pick a favorite family recipe, share an ingredient list ahead of time with friends or family, and then get together virtually to try cooking or baking. Good times are guaranteed, whether you end up with delicious dumplings or poorly decorated cookies.

**Game night** | If you thrive on competition, make your virtual gatherings about more than just conversation. Trivia, charades, and even board games, can all work great online. Or try out a virtual bake-off, talent show or a scavenger hunt where teams race to find common and not-so-common items around their house. This is also a fun one to set up for kids so they can connect virtually with friends.

If you choose to celebrate with friends or family (outside your household) in person, you are increasing the risk of COVID-19 infection. Help to lessen the risk by keeping the group small, gathering outside if possible, and wear masks. Make sure you have room for guests to spread out and avoid sharing food and beverages. <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/celebrations-during-covid?fbclid=IwAR0haE0jrVTNsBxQWg3U2p4kNthPO7zRixEsqBphitxc85jEfktTslnd3Y>



# Looking for Family Fun Activities this Holiday Season?



**Lightening of Langley:** Langley sparkles for the holidays with the annual Lighting of Langley community celebration at 4 p.m. Saturday, November 28, 2020 at The Plaza on Second across from the fire house glass studio. Enjoy singing carols, sipping hot cocoa, and Santa! This annual tree-lighting kicks off the holiday season in the Village by the Sea.

**Gingerbread House Workshop** goes Viral: November 29 @ 1:00 AM GINGERBREAD HOUSE WORKSHOP goes viral. Sunday, November 29th 1:00 (while supplies last) The Friends of the Sno-Isle Library and CHWA volunteers will hand out gingerbread house kits to families in a drive up line at the library. Along with the kit will be instructions on how to enter their creation in our Gingerbread House virtual contest. Please visit [coupevillehistoricwaterfront.com](http://coupevillehistoricwaterfront.com) for more details.

**Holly Jolly Holiday Parade** & Shop & Stroll: Langley hosts its annual holiday parade at 1 p.m. on Saturday, December 5, 2020. Musicians, service and youth groups, pets, families and floats will march up and down First and Second Street.

**Country Christmas' at the Fair:** Bazaar boutique will be filled with unique hand crafted gifts and gift ideas for everyone! Come and enjoy some holiday music and free kids craft. Coffman Building, Island County Fairgrounds  
819 Camano Ave, Langley WA, 98260 Free Admission  
Friday, November 27, 12-7pm, Saturday, November 28, 10am-4pm, Sunday, November 29, 10am-4pm, Friday, December 4, 12-7pm  
Saturday, December 5, 10am-4pm, Sunday, December 6, 10am-4pm

Other events pending. We will post other events on our Facebook page as they become available. **Events subject to change.** Check Chamber of Commerce before you leave.

# How to Ask What Kids Are Feeling

Ways to get insight into how your kids are handling stressful times

Donna Freydkin

“Our job as parents isn’t to provide certainty in a time of uncertainty. Our job is to help kids tolerate the uncertainty,” explains Jerry Bubrick, PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute.

Kids aren’t stupid. Nor are they obtuse. They hear you discussing the increasingly dire COVID-19 news, they see headlines on your social media feed, and they understand that to a large extent, the stuff they once enjoyed doing is no longer in play. Playing epidemiologist isn’t going to work. Kids don’t need specific answers, they need broader certitude that they are loved and will be taken care of — certitude that makes the ambiguity of the moment manageable.

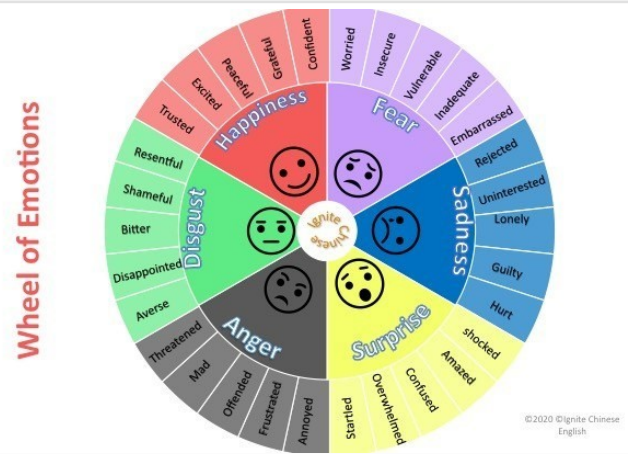
## How to validate their feelings

“We want to teach them how to tolerate not knowing. You should let them explain how they’re feeling and why, and you can help them validate those feelings by saying things like, ‘I have similar worries. Let’s brainstorm ideas on how we can make things better.’ Instead of just giving answers, you want to have a conversation and compare notes,” says Dr. Bubrick.

Getting kids, regardless of age, involved in problem-solving makes them feel empowered and like they’re part of the solution. But as Dr. Bubrick points out, if you ask vague questions, you’ll get vague answers, including the dreaded “I’m fine” (the quintessential conversational dead end). Dr. Bubrick’s advice is to lead with curiosity and ask open-ended yet specific questions:

- What did you learn about today?
- What is something interesting or funny you heard about today?
- What was the most fun thing you did today?
- What are you most looking forward to tomorrow?
- What was the toughest part of your day today?

“Bedtime is not the right time. Kids are starting to wind down for the day. Anxious kids have more worries at night. Don’t lead them down the path of more worry. And don’t talk to them about this when they first wake up. Find a time, a neutral time, when there hasn’t been a big argument. Look for a calm moment,” says Dr. Bubrick.



He suggests having laid-back discussions either during dinner, or while taking a family walk. And he relies on a simple yet clever approach that gets people to open up.

“With my kids, I suggest a game: Like a rose. It’s an icebreaker and it’s our thing. You start and model the game. There are three components to the rose. The petal: ‘Tell me something you liked about today.’ The thorn: ‘Tell me something you didn’t like.’ The bud: ‘Tell me something you’re looking forward to in the future.’ You have to model it to get a response.”

## Helping kids name feelings

If your children aren’t able to articulate how they’re feeling, use a [feelings chart](#) and work your way from there. Some 5-year-olds can explain, with total clarity, what upended their emotions and why. Some teens, meanwhile, can barely manage a two-word response and won’t dig deeper without gentle prodding. You want to have children be as specific as possible about what exactly they’re feeling.

“If you can name it, you can tame it,” says Dr. Bubrick.

His final note is just as applicable to kids as to their adult minders. Don’t spin out. Don’t catastrophize. And remind kids that no, their friends aren’t having secret sleepovers or hitting the playground. We’re all stuck at home together.

“We want to help kids stay in the moment. It’s so easy to get wrapped up in the unknown. All we know is what’s happening to us right now. We have each other. We’re connected to our friends. Let’s focus on that. We’ll deal with tomorrow, tomorrow,” he says.



PARENT to PARENT



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(360)632-7539 call/text  
t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov  
Just a reminder to add my new email address to your address book.

Like us on Facebook for updates on events and resources in our community.



Join us for Coffee and Conversations. Two opportunities to meet other families, ask questions, find out about resources or sit back with your favorite beverage. Both versions available through Zoom. Email to receive Zoom link t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov

Daytime December 2nd 11:00am-Noon

Nighttime December 9th 6:30pm-7:30pm

## 8 things to remember when going through tough times.

1. Everything can - and will - change.
2. You've overcome challenges before.
3. It's a learning experience.
4. Not getting what you want can be a blessing.
5. Allow yourself to have some fun.
6. Being kind to yourself is the best medicine.
7. Other people's negativity isn't worth worrying about.
8. And there is always, always, always, something to be thankful for.

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## Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families Supporting Children and Teens During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Behavioral Health Group developed the COVID-19 Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families: The toolbox gives tips on how to understand emotional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes an appendix on **Tips for Families of Children & Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**. The Behavioral Health Strike team guides the work for the COVID-19 Behavioral Health Group. The Behavioral Health Strike Team includes seven doctoral-level psychologists, one psychiatrist, and one Board Certified Couple and Family Psychologist. We hope that you will use this resource to help the families and children you serve. By learning to recognize the signs of pandemic stress and knowing what actions to take, we can improve behavioral health outcomes in our communities. "Google" DOH WA COVID Behavior Health Toolbox