

HALDANE COVID-19 Q&A

*Highlights from Dr. Benante's April 14
Webinar for the Haldane Community*

[View the Webinar
on the COVID-19 tab of the Haldane website.](#)



Guest: Danielle Pack McCarthy, Executive Director, Philipstown Behavioral Health Hub

Question:

I see that my child is struggling with his “new reality.” He seems more anxious, misses his friends, and has trouble getting his day started. What should I do?

Danielle:

This question goes back to the idea of routine. The first thing we should do is acknowledge how difficult this is for us as adults and parents, and for our kids. The idea of a routine can be calming for us all.

The approach may vary depending on the age of the child. With elementary school students, experts recommend a regular wake-up time and start to the day. Middle and high schoolers can take more ownership and plan their daily routines with parents. That may include sleeping later, and then planning what the day will look like to balance school work and social time. Something as simple as making a daily list in a planner or on a whiteboard is a stress-reducing way to manage the day. Attentive listening to our children is also important.

Dr. Benante:

Haldane is working to reaffirm this with families to allow for flexibility while also providing support and structure.

Question:

I know I should limit my child’s time on social media, but all of her friends are on it and she tells me it’s her way of staying connected. If I allow her to use it, what are some parameters I should establish to curb the negative consequences?

Danielle:

It is important to establish a routine and set parameters to differentiate school work time and socialization time. Some students are FaceTiming with a friend while they do work together, which can be helpful, as long as the time is focused. We want to be cautious of our children developing negative habits during this time, and parents should remain cognizant of online activity.

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Question:

Can you talk more about the distinction between using social media to connect in a positive way versus the negative impacts, beyond distraction from school work?

Danielle:

There is proliferation now of video calls and online activity without adult supervision. In addition to safety issues, we also need to be conscious of mental health concerns. Cyberbullying may increase as students have more time on their hands. Social media also creates a sense of comparison between oneself and friends or even celebrities, which can impact mental health.

Question:

How can we help our children stay motivated during this time without the same level of academic pressure or outlets for athletic competition?

Danielle:

We all like to be challenged and we need to help our children find things that give purpose to their day. It may help to pursue things that are outside of our “normal” activities and interests. Beyond checking the boxes of regular school work, setting daily or weekly goals for new activities may help. These short-term plans can be especially helpful given the unknown length of time that we are home.

Dr. Benante:

Something as simple as setting a schedule can have a significant impact. At the same time, we have the opportunity to enjoy reconnecting as families and exploring new activities together.

Question:

How can we establish balanced routines when things get back to “normal,” and how can we hold on to the positive ways that we reframed our thoughts about others during this time?

Danielle:

Being present in our day-to-day lives can help us hold on to the positive results of this time. We can work to help our children bring that skill forward, as well, when life opens up a little more.

Dr. Benante:

As we transition out of the crisis, we also have to be responsible on a personal level. There may be a desire to celebrate the fact that we can be together again, but that may not be the most responsible thing to do. Heeding the guidance of our public health officials will be important during that time.

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Question:

Can teachers communicate school assignments to parents so they can help their children stay on top of due dates and workflow?

Dr. Benante:

I'm sensitive to the fact that parents are now helping their children manage schedules and school work in a new way. I will bring this back to our principals to discuss how we can help families be more in tune with class assignments.

Question:

Are there other ways that Haldane can connect students online such as talent shows, the Kindergarten Sing-a-long, the Elementary School musical, and clubs and teams?

Dr. Benante:

We do want our clubs and teams to stay connected online and I will follow up with our administrative team to help our students maintain those networks. We are being somewhat cautious about how extensively we use the online platforms so that we can manage student safety.

I know that it means a lot to my own kids to be able to connect with their classmates online, and I agree that it's important for us to maintain our social connections. As Danielle said at the beginning of this webinar, this should really be a time of physical distancing, not social distancing.

We appreciate how flexible and understanding everyone has been during this transition, and we will continue to evolve in the ways that we connect the Haldane community.