



Healthy Minds Newsletter

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Let's Work Together



Checking In

Checking in with your children is important because it creates an opportunity for connection, and helps you to create a baseline of what your child is experiencing during any particular moment. Checking in can increase self-reflection and self-monitoring which can lead to better self-regulation. Attempting to understand how our children experience a circumstance, both emotionally and mentally helps us to recognize the level of demands a child may be able to tolerate, and how we can adjust accordingly. It's important to check in with yourself too because you may need to adjust what you expect of yourself! Click [here](#) for a check in/check out sheet. If you notice your child does not have a wide understanding of their emotions and how to identify them, [this worksheet](#) is a great tool and activity to utilize together.

You do not NEED a sheet to check in, it is quite simple. Simply check in with your child with the following questions.

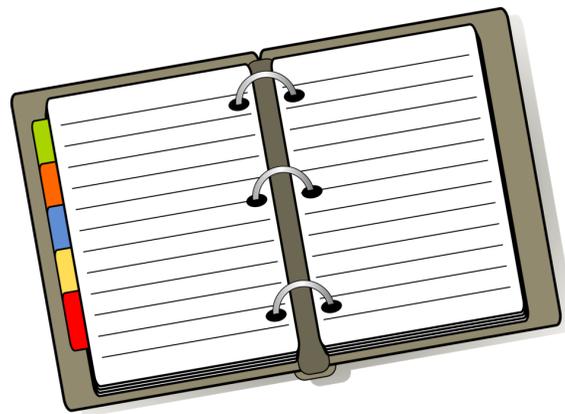
1. "I'm wondering how you are feeling right now?"

(Child: I'm feeling mad!

Adult: Thank you for telling me that! I can see you're mad! I wonder if you can help me understand why you're mad?)

2. "I wonder what you need right now to feel better?"

(The 'need' might not be reasonable in the moment but you can offer a hug, a chance to talk about their feelings or a break from the situation.)



Visual Schedules

One of the characteristics of autism that many point out is the need for consistent routine. The thing is, we **ALL** thrive on a routine, and knowing what to expect day to day. During this time of uncertainty, schedules are very important when it comes to avoiding tantrums, and increasing work completion. Visual schedules can include icons, picture strips, and elaborate boards.... or they can simply be a to-do list with a due date! Utilizing a visual schedule for kids during this time to support them in work and chore completion is incredibly helpful. I encourage including your child in the creation of their own schedule for each day! Be sure to include time for "cash outs," and "breaks," within the schedule... therefore your child will know when work time is finished!

Here are some tips when creating your visual schedule:

1. Be clear in the task that needs to be completed. Whether this means utilizing a picture or icon that shows the exact demand, or clearly defining the chore/task that needs to be completed during that specific time.
2. Display the schedule from top to bottom! Whether this is a numbered list (kind of like the one you are reading now) or pictures layed out.
3. Include a way to "check off," what has been completed. Whether this is a "finished," an envelope that an icon is moved to, or simply a check-box that is crossed off, it feels good to know that a task is done and out of the way!

4. Include a time frame for each task. You could break down the time frame into two sections “morning schedule,” and “night schedule,” or you could set a timer for each individual task.... It is important to know **when** the task must be completed by.
5. Provide choices when possible. I find it helpful to just label “work times,” and then provide myself with choices of what I could get done during that time. For example, if 11am-12pm is a work time, I would give myself the option of completing writing, or math during that time!

Click [here](#) for layout ideas
 Click [here](#) for picture strips
 Click [here](#) for free resources



Behavior Momentum

There are always chores that even as adults, we simply do **not** enjoy doing. Behavior momentum is a tool that you can use to get moving in the right direction. Behavior Momentum is successfully completing small demands and receiving positive reinforcement after, allowing us to feel prepared for the harder, less preferred tasks that we must complete.

Behavior momentum can be done in as easy as four steps.

The four steps to behavior momentum:

1. Give a quick one-step demand that you know for sure your child can comply with.
Examples: Touch your nose, clap your hands, come here, look at me, jump, give me a high five, touch your toes, etc. As soon as the demand is complete, praise! Be mindful of what demands are easy for your individual child.
2. Quickly give another one step demand! Praise upon completion.
3. Give one more one step demand and praise once again!

4. Finish by providing the instruction that you want your child to follow. This could include chores, beginning school work, etc. Praise them immediately as they begin the task and let them know how much you appreciate their cooperation!

See behavior momentum in action [here](#).



Life Skills

While your kids are home, it's the perfect opportunity to teach them life skills, such as basic household chores or daily living skills. We often teach life skills through task analyses, which involves breaking down the skill into several steps, and teaching each step individually. We have provided two task analyses below for folding a blanket or towel and wiping the table.

Folding a Blanket or Towel	Wiping the Table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lay the blanket/towel out on the floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather cleaning supplies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold the blanket/towel by the corners on one side, folding it in half 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take out one wipe or one paper towel (if using paper towel, spray the table)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold the blanket/towel by the corners on one side, folding it in half again 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wipe table in circular motion until it appears clean
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place blanket/towel in a "finished" pile or place in a closet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Throw away wipe or paper towel



Bring it all together: In order to teach folding blankets or towels, make sure to include this task on some type of **visual schedule** at home. If you don't have a picture schedule, you can write out a schedule each day for your child, and be sure to include any life skills you'd like them to complete to foster independence. This schedule can be given to them at their **check in** and they can review all they have completed during their **check out** each day. If the first step of folding is difficult for your child, you can use **behavior momentum** to increase the chances of the correct response on the first step. Have your child do a few easy motions like clap hands, touch nose, pinch fingers, so then

they are prepared to complete the first step of pinching their fingers around the blanket corners to lay it out. Remember to provide praise!



Social Skills: How to Apologize

Social Skills: Apologizing

The best way to teach your child to apologize, is to model it yourself. We all make mistakes, and modeling ownership of our mistakes in addition to future behavior change can go such a long way. Below are five steps to apologizing that can be utilized to explicitly teach your child some steps that can be included in apologies.

Five steps to apologizing:

1. Make sure you are calm. We do not want to apologize until we're back in rational thought. This could take minutes, days, or even weeks. That is okay. It is very important to only apologize when you are ready emotionally, and truly need it.
2. Reflect on what happened, and what you are apologizing for.
3. Rid of excuses, own the action you are apologizing for. Remove statements such as "he made me do it," "I only did it because they did it first," etc.
4. Be sincere, and practice empathy. Acknowledge how the act you're apologizing for may have affected the other person. "*I know what I did hurt you and I feel very sorry.*"
5. Do better next time. Ask if there is any action that can be taken to make things right. "How can I do better next time?" "How can I make it right?"

** It should always be noted that apologies are **not** always necessary and many people believe that children should never be forced to apologize. [Here](#) is an article sharing that point of view.

[Here](#) is a social story about apologizing.

[Here](#) are feelings/ emotions visuals if needed.

[Here](#) are "sorry scripts," to utilize as tools.

[Here](#) is an accommodated sorry visual.

Mindful Moment

Practice kind thoughts by prompting your child to think of 5 people they'd like to send kind wishes to! Sit with your child(ren) and have them share a kind wish they have for each person- have them imagine their wish floating through space to reach the person.

Have the child imagine how happy and loved the person feels when he/she/they receives the wish. Wonder about how your child feels when he/she/they have given the wish. And finally, share a wish you have for your child.



Weekly Tips

1. **Dance it out!** I encourage you to take 5-10 minutes out of your day to dance with your kids. Whether you are allowing them to share a favorite song with you, or you are sharing one of your favorites with them... take some time to enjoy some activity and laughs. Lauryn Elder
M.Ed.,BCBA
2. **Explore a passion!** Our current situation has given us something we often say we don't have enough of - **time!** Use this time to explore your child's interests that you otherwise might not get to enjoy. Whether that's creating huge forts out of blankets, cooking, or drawing; you might even find something new that you enjoy doing together. - Alexis Foulk, M.S., BCBA
3. **Foster independence!** Now that your kids are home 24/7, they have a lot more free time, and it can be easy to do simple things for them, like clearing their dishes or picking up their toys. Make

sure to use this time to encourage their independence, completing these tasks for themselves, even if teaching these skills takes a while, you've got nothing but time! - Alexandria Larson M.S., BCBA

4. **Mirror each other!** Sit criss cross applesauce, facing your child. Start by raising your hand and have your child follow, as if they are in a mirror. You can move your hands or body any way, having them copy you. Make funny faces, do silly things- enjoy the creativity! Then, you follow your child! Take turns having fun being the leader! Jennifer Stein, LPCMH



Just for Fun

Virtual Tours: Click on the links below to go on a virtual adventure! Check back each week for different locations!

1. [Smithsonian National Zoo](#) - Check out the lion camera to see some wild cats! There is also an elephant cam, naked mole rat cam, and a giant panda cam! The Smithsonian National Zoo has also provided a link for educational and fun activities to accompany the live cams!
2. [LEGOLAND](#) - Have you ever seen a giant dragon built from Legos? No? Well now you can! Use this link to check out Legoland and all the cool things you can create! If you see something *really* cool, try to make your own at home!

Keeping Kids Engaged at Home: [A to Z Activities for Parents And Kids to Enjoy Together](#)

Brandywine School District
Behavioral Support Team
Wilmington, DE

Email Lauryn Elder for teacher questions: Lauryn.Elder@bsd.k12.de.us
Email Alexis Foulk for additional resources: Alexis.Foulk@bsd.k12.de.us
Email Alexandria Larson for parent questions: Alexandria.Larson@bsd.k12.de.us
Email Jen Stein for mental health tips: Jennifer.Stein@bsd.k12.de.us