

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Parenting During the Pandemic

As nationwide efforts are being undertaken to reduce the spread of 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19), many families are still struggling to cope with the challenges of increased family time at home. Whether hybrid, all virtual or traditional full day school instruction, long-established routines have been transformed which can lead to an increase in family conflict and child behavior problems. Parents are under tremendous stress, and kids are feeling the impact too. Some children cannot always articulate their feelings and are less developed in their ability to problem solve. This stress can therefore show up as disruptive behavior, noncompliance, and tantrums.

These issues have been raised to Mrs. Laurent Caballero, SAFE Coalition's Parent Committee Chair and bi-Lingual Life Skills Training (LST) parent program facilitator. LST is an evidence-based parenting program offered twice yearly, the Fall and Spring, for eight weeks to Glen Cove parents. The program provides parents with the tools and knowledge to be effective, and to learn practical approaches that come with the challenges of raising children utilizing positive approaches to understanding and raising children. COVID-19 has brought to the family system a set of new stressors and ensuing behavioral problems and parents are looking for help during this difficult time.

Mr. Tony Gallo, SAFE Coalition Co-Chair and professional educator, presented a Parent workshop translated by Mrs. Caballero to share preventive strategies for parents to decrease the likelihood of future challenges. These strategies can have a positive impact on children's behavior by minimizing triggers that lead to tantrums and defiance:

- Moving, eating and sleeping: The basics are more important than ever. Ensure that your child is maintaining good sleeping, eating, and exercise routines.
- Make time for quality time: When time and resources allow, try to join your child in play and leisure activities. This will not only help to maintain a positive relationship, but it will make setting limits easier down the road.

- Catch your child being good. By calling attention to your child when your child is being a good listener or coping appropriately, you increase the chance that your child will repeat those behaviors in the future

“Parents should try their best to provide structure as research demonstrates children do best when routines are in place and expectations are clear,” said Gallo. Given the unpredictability of COVID-19, predictability can help children feel a sense of comfort and safety.

Ways to incorporate predictability can include creating a visual daily schedule that your child can reference throughout the day. Breaking down tasks into more manageable steps can reduce frustration and prevent meltdowns. Using a timer or alarm to cue you and your child to the completion of an activity is also helpful. Mr. Gallo advised parents that offering their child a choice can also help instill a sense of control during this uncertain time. For example, when options are available, let your child choose which clothes he or she wears or where he or she does their quiet reading are minor decisions that can enhance children’s sense of control. Be clear upfront about which expectations are and are not flexible.

Mr. Gallo ended the presentation emphasizing the importance of parents taking time for self-care and even offered some personal examples. When parents are stressed, they become more emotionally reactive and can easily enter into a ‘coercive cycle’ with their child. By parents managing their own stress, they set themselves up to more effectively address the situation. Self-care efforts make you feel better and the effects will trickle down to family relationships and child behavior.

Parents were receptive to Mr. Gallo’s suggestions and engaged in the dialogue. More Parent workshops will be offered as the need continues.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is concerned about how COVID-19 has affected children and families and would like to connect the public to important resources for individuals, families, youth and health care providers. For more information please visit Keeping Glen Cove SAFE: COVID-19 page on SAFE’s website at www.safeglencove.org.