

Promoting Student Wellness During COVID-19



Notice anything “off” in this photo of my middle school principal? Hint: Students thought this was hilarious.

“When I FaceTimed with my student’s dog on day one of distance learning, I realized I should just start expecting the unexpected.”



“The reporters keep telling parents how to deal with their kids if schools are closed, but they have it backwards! They should be telling US how to deal with our parents.”

- 7th grade boy



Start with what you already know about what middle schoolers need

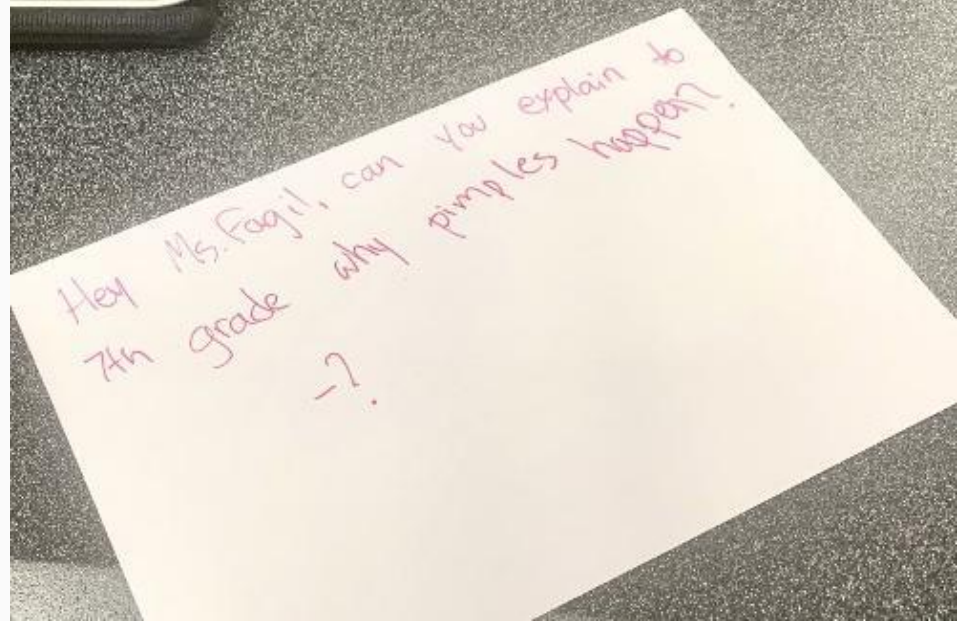
- Time to process emotions
- Help with coping skills
- A sense of belonging
- Voice and choice
- Respect, acceptance
- Time to socialize & connect
- Sense of purpose

“Students must speak either face-to-face with technology or over the phone to one friend or family member not in your household at least once every three days -- texting doesn’t count!”

--My son’s sixth-grade teacher

More of what tweens need...

- Time to talk about the so-called small stuff
- Normalcy, consistency, humor, breaks from tough feelings
- Fun, novelty, safe thrills, movement



“So, this whole social distancing thing isn’t really working for me because of my social needs.”

- 7th grade girl



Concrete ways educators can meet tweens' needs during distance learning

- **Begin each lesson/exchange with personal greetings, mood ratings**
- **But don't ask, "Are you okay"**
- **Share coping strategies as a group**
- **Validate & normalize losses and the learning curve (talk about "biggest mistakes")**
- **Hold lunch bunches, book clubs, virtual hang-outs to share pets or talents, virtual talent shows**

Concrete ways educators can meet tweens' needs during distance learning

- **Keep “office hours” to help with organization, understanding**
- **Consider capstone projects vs. tests**
- **Post optional fun stuff to do, ie virtual aquarium, movement activities**
- **Post videos of your pet --or yourself**
- **Be alert for mental health problems (but use back-up support)**

**Idea: Give
them an
opportunity to
teach *you*
something...**



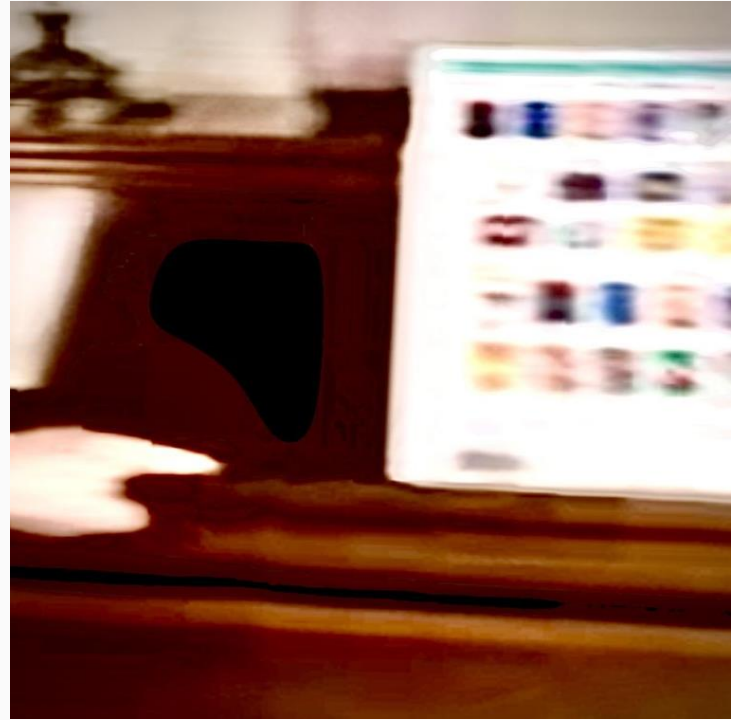
More ways to meet tweens' needs during distance learning...

- **Take a strengths-based approach (four positives for every negative)**
- **Share inspiring stories from history to instill hope**
- **Focus on how they're "helpers"**
- **Suggest ways they can assist others (N.U.T.S. recipe for stress)**
- **Help them connect (esp. those who struggle normally; be concrete)**

More ways to meet tweens' needs during distance learning...

- **Remind them to be kind, and hold them accountable for cruelty (explain brain science)**
- **Recognize they all have different resources, demands at home**
- **Support parents**
- **Crowd-source ideas with colleagues, administrators**
- **Keep it fun, ie Spirit Week, “teacher parades”**

Idea: Let them perform for you or show you something they built or created...



“Playing for me probably wasn’t quite as satisfying for him as performing in the school talent show, but it was something.”

A few ideas for educators -- remember, emotions are contagious, and self-care isn't self-indulgent...

- **Headspace (free for educators)**
- **Virtual hang-outs/yoga classes/book clubs/share hobbies with colleagues**
- **Check in on one another**
- **Connect online, ie Twitter for educators**
- **Teletherapy if needed**
- **Exercise, sleep etc. (be a role model and share your approach)**

Discussion and Questions...

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