

How to Prepare and Support Your Child with Zoom Distance Learning:

One of the things I have heard from many parents and teachers lately is that children are having mixed feelings about distance learning on video platforms such as Zoom. Parents and teachers alike have shared that this is surprising, as they expected the child to be excited to see their teachers and friends. But just like us, children are going through tough times right now.

Let's think about what this "new normal" might be like for your child. Your child may be happy to see their friends but also sad, confused or even angry that he/she cannot see and play with their friends like they used to. Your child may be wondering when things will go back to normal or what other changes might happen.

When young children have big feelings, they often do not express their feelings the same way adults do. You may see your child trying to avoid distance learning, becoming fidgety during the video session, or even having a meltdown after. These are all developmentally appropriate ways your child may express big feelings.

So, how can we support and prepare our child when it comes to video distance learning?

Talk about how video chatting works. You want to teach your child Zoom101. Let your child know where to talk and where to look. Ask your child if they have any questions and let them know ahead of time that a Zoom meeting will be happening. You can do a 5-minute count down before it is time to join Zoom to ease your child into the activity. I also like to talk about the activities we are going to do together on Zoom.

Notice and acknowledge your child's feelings and body cues. Somedays I hear a child may be feeling excited and comfortable with zoom meetings. But another day, I may hear the complete opposite. Is your child looking away from the video screen or trying to move around during the Zoom call? This may be a sign your child is feeling overwhelmed or not interested. You don't want to force your child to participate. Forcing your child to participate often backfires, leading to stress and power struggles. Strong and changing feelings are all normal. You want to acknowledge your child's feelings and be there to support them. Try asking your child how they feel about seeing their friends and teachers on Zoom.

Be mindful of your child's developmental level. Young children typically learn through play and connections, not workbooks or lectures. Your child learns best by interacting and engaging with others. Singing, reading and participating with your child will help maintain their interest during distance learning. Incorporating movement such as dancing and using gestures to act out stories can also be a great way to keep your child engaged. Your child might need to move around a little to get some energy out. You will often be able to tell when your child's attention span has run out. We want to make sure we tune-in to our child and acknowledge when it is time for them (and us) to take a "break".

Learning should be a positive experience. You want to try your best to keep learning fun and playful. Let's remember to be extra patient and flexible with our children during this time. We all do our best when experiences are positive and supportive.

Submitted by: Tiffani Olenik, LCSW
Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center

