NEWSLETTER

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THE CARE WE GIVE & THE CARE WE NEED

November often brings a greater focus on family, gratitude, and the people who make a difference in our lives. But this season can also bring added responsibilities, complicated emotions, and reminders of people we miss. While some are looking forward to time with loved ones, others may be navigating exhaustion, grief, or challenges that aren't always visible to those around them.

This month, we're focusing on three important parts of caring for one another: helping young children develop emotional skills, recognizing the needs of family caregivers, and supporting those who have experienced the loss of someone to suicide.

Each of these experiences looks different, but they remind us of something important: caring for others begins with understanding what they may be going through.



BEYOND THE BAN: NEXT GEN LIFE SKILLS

By Krista Carter, Psychology & Education Faculty and Education Program Director, Colby Community College

One of the things I enjoy about teaching at the college level is getting to work with future educators. Recently, in my Educational Technology course, we've been having some interesting conversations, as we've explored different topics, I've noticed a common theme running through many of our conversations:

- **We spend considerable time teaching students how to use technology. How much time do we spend helping them understand how technology influences them?**

The interesting thing is how quickly this conversation becomes about so much more than technology. We start talking about attention, learning, relationships, mental health, and the habits we're developing, often without even realizing it. And somewhere along the way, we start thinking about our own technology habits too. I know I have!

With the recent changes in Kansas regarding cell phones in schools and the ongoing conversations about instructional technology policies, I think this is an important time to be asking these questions. I understand why we're putting boundaries in place. We want students to be able to focus, learn, build relationships, and be present. But I also find myself wondering what happens beyond those boundaries.

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BEYOND THE BAN: NEXT GEN LIFE SKILLS CONT...

- **What happens when students leave school, the restrictions are gone, and they're making these decisions on their own?**

Think about something as simple as a notification on your phone. We know it can interrupt what we're doing. But knowing that and actually ignoring it are two different things. How many times do we pick up our phones without even thinking about it? If we struggle with some of these habits as adults, what does that mean for children and teenagers who are still developing the ability to manage their attention and behavior? And are we helping students understand these things about themselves? Do they recognize how technology can influence their attention, their relationships, or even how they feel?

I think it's easy to get caught up in conversations about what we need to limit, restrict, or protect children from. And I'm not suggesting we shouldn't have limits. I think we need them. But I wonder if we're spending as much time thinking about what we're preparing children for as we are about what we're protecting them from.

Policies can help us create boundaries, but they can't do all the teaching for us. How are we helping students develop the understanding and skills they'll need when we're no longer the ones setting those limits?

- **Perhaps the most important question isn't simply what we want students to do with technology today, but who we're helping them become as they learn to navigate it tomorrow.**

It's a question I continue to wrestle with, both personally and through my work with future and current educators. And I think it's a conversation worth continuing together. Project FRONTIER has procured access to **The Screen Guardians** program that teaches parents, students and schools how to raise digitally healthy kids through education, connection and shared responsibility.

If you believe in equipping families and schools with a research-based method of making smart choices in a tech-filled world, please contact a FRONTIER liaison at projectfrontier@nkesc.org to learn more about how to bring this program to your school!





EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH - BIG FEELINGS START SMALL

Young children experience big emotions long before they have the words or skills to explain them. A toddler who throws a tantrum, a preschooler who struggles with transitions, or a child who suddenly becomes clingy may be communicating a need they don't yet know how to express. Early childhood mental health involves more than a child's behavior. It includes their ability to form relationships, express emotions, manage frustration, and feel safe exploring the world around them. These skills develop over time, with support from caring adults.

What Is Your Child Trying to Tell You?

When a child is overwhelmed, their behavior may be a sign that they need help regulating their emotions rather than a sign that they're intentionally being difficult.

When a child has a meltdown:



Focus on helping them calm down before trying to teach a lesson. Use a steady voice and simple words, such as, "I can see you're upset. I'm here to help."

When a child struggles with transitions:



Give advance warnings when possible. Saying, "Five more minutes, then we'll clean up," can help children prepare for a change.

When a child becomes frustrated:



Acknowledge the feeling while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Try, "It's okay to feel angry. It's not okay to hit. Let's figure out what you can do instead."

When a child needs extra reassurance:



Offer comfort and consistency. A predictable routine, a familiar goodbye, or a few minutes of focused attention can help a child feel more secure.

Remember: Connection Comes Before Correction

Young children are still developing the skills needed to manage their emotions. They need opportunities to practice those skills with adults who can remain calm, set boundaries, and offer reassurance. You won't handle every moment perfectly, and that's okay. Repairing a difficult interaction by reconnecting with your child is also an important part of building trust.

If emotional or behavioral concerns persist, interfere with daily activities, or cause significant distress, consider talking with your child's pediatrician or an early childhood mental health professional.

> *Children don't need adults who never get frustrated. They need adults who are willing to reconnect, guide, and help them learn.*

NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH - WHO TAKES CARE OF THE CAREGIVER?

November is National Family Caregivers Month, a time to recognize the people who provide ongoing care for loved ones. Family caregivers may support aging parents, spouses, children with disabilities, or relatives navigating illness and other long-term needs.

Caregiving can be an expression of deep love, but it can also be exhausting. Between appointments, medications, household responsibilities, finances, and emotional support, caregivers may find themselves with little time or energy left for their own needs.

Sometimes the people who appear to be managing everything are the ones who need support the most.

A Reminder for Caregivers

Your needs matter, too. Taking a break, accepting help, or making time for something you enjoy does not mean you care any less about the person you're supporting. If caregiving is becoming difficult to manage, consider reaching out to family members, healthcare providers, caregiver support groups, or local organizations that offer respite care and other services.



Recognizing Caregiver Burnout

Caregiver stress can build gradually. Someone may not realize how overwhelmed they are until exhaustion begins affecting their health, relationships, or daily life.

Signs that a caregiver may need additional support include:

- Feeling constantly exhausted or overwhelmed
- Becoming more irritable, anxious, or withdrawn
- Losing interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Having difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Feeling guilty about taking breaks or asking for help

These experiences don't mean someone is failing as a caregiver. They may be signs that the demands of caregiving have become too much to manage alone.

How to Help a Caregiver in Your Life

Rather than offering a general "Let me know if you need anything," try making a specific offer:

- "I'm going to the grocery store. What can I pick up for you?"
- "Can I sit with your loved one for an hour while you take a break?"
- "I'd love to bring dinner on Thursday. Would that help?"
- "Would you like company, or would some quiet time be better today?"

Small, practical gestures can reduce the daily load and remind caregivers that they don't have to do everything themselves.

This month, check in on the caregiver—not just the person receiving care.



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INTERNATIONAL SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS DAY: WHEN SOMEONE IS GRIEVING, WHAT DO YOU SAY?

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is observed on the Saturday before Thanksgiving in the United States. This day—November 21, 2026—brings together people who have lost someone to suicide and offers opportunities for understanding, support, and connection with others who have experienced a similar loss.

Losing someone to suicide can bring a complicated mix of emotions, including sadness, anger, confusion, guilt, and unanswered questions. Grief may change over time, and certain moments—holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, or family gatherings—can make the loss feel especially difficult.

Friends and family members often want to help but worry about saying the wrong thing. The truth is that you don't need the perfect words. Compassion, honesty, and a willingness to listen can mean more than trying to explain something that may not have an explanation.

What Can You Say?

Instead of: "Everything happens for a reason."
- **Try**: "I'm so sorry. I know there aren't words that can make this better, but I'm here for you."

Instead of: "You need to stay strong."
- **Try**: "You don't have to pretend to be okay around me."

Instead of: Avoiding the person's loved one because you're unsure what to say.
- **Try**: "I've been thinking about you and your loved one. Would you like to tell me about them?"

Grief doesn't end after the funeral, and support shouldn't end there either.

- Check in after the initial weeks have passed.
- Remember meaningful dates and acknowledge that they may be difficult.
- Allow the person to talk about their loved one without changing the subject.
- Offer practical help during especially difficult times.
- Respect that grief looks different for everyone.

If you've experienced suicide loss, you deserve support. A grief counselor, support group, or community of people who understand this experience can provide a place to talk openly without feeling that you need to explain every emotion.

You don't have to fix someone's grief to help them feel less alone. You can find some helpful resources here: https://sixftover.org/lemon-aid/

Caring for others is part of what makes families and communities strong. But care also means recognizing when someone is overwhelmed, offering help without judgment, and remembering that the people who support others need support themselves. This November, consider who in your life might need a little extra understanding. It could be a parent navigating a child's big emotions, a caregiver carrying more than anyone realizes, or someone approaching the holidays while grieving a loved one. You may not know the full story, and you don't need to. Sometimes the most meaningful thing you can offer is a little patience, a listening ear, or a reminder that someone doesn't have to face a difficult season alone.