

Lighthouse of Collier
Story to Share

The coronavirus pandemic is taking its toll on everyone, including the children. I noticed it in an email from a high school student last week. The email was terse, lacked friendliness, and was, perhaps, even filled with anger. Ideas I had enthusiastically researched for virtual instruction were rejected. The emails continued back and forth, until we reached an agreement to set up a Zoom meeting in preparation for attending a webinar. It was during this Zoom meeting that true emotions were expressed about loneliness and social isolation. I realized that this sharing of feelings was more important than any technical skill I could teach.

Later that afternoon, we attended a webinar entitled, Self-Awareness Success. Areas addressed included: dealing with frustration, coping with loneliness and advocating for oneself. Students were encouraged to practice coping strategies such as meditating, deep breathing, venting to a trusted friend, and finding a teacher who is there for them. They were taught to formulate I CAN statements for every I CAN'T (for example, I can't read standard print but I can read an email you send to me). Strategies for making friends were discussed such as turning to parents, church leaders and teachers or by starting school groups that combat social isolation such as Hope Squad, Lunch Bunch and Best Buddies. The goal of the webinar was to motivate students to get to know themselves and understand their emotions. They were given resources to take a "Me Vacation" to learn about themselves. Five minutes after the webinar ended, I received an email stating, "It was Amazing! Where can I learn more about Self Awareness? I want to study it more! " This was the bubbly, upbeat student I knew, and it was a joy to see her enthusiasm return.

An enormous amount of new learning is occurring both for students and staff during these unprecedented times. This week, the student will attend a webinar entitled, Staying Home: Making Social Connections in the Face of Social Distancing with No or Limited Vision. I can only imagine how she will be transformed in a positive way through the information she receives and as she interacts with others through a virtual chat. More than anything, my hope for her is more human connectedness and less loneliness.

Cindy Bello, MA, OTR/L
Parent Advisor
Lighthouse of Collier
2685 Horseshoe Drive South
Suite 211
Naples, FL 34104
Phone: (239)430-3934
Fax: (239)430-9213