

Strategies for Effective Engagement with School Staff, Families, and Caregivers in a Virtual Environment

You can integrate these strategies into the conversations and interactions you already have with school staff and a student's caregiver.

You will not use all the strategies every time you interact with school staff and families. Use the strategies you need in the situation you need them.

1 Determine Preferred Method of Communication

- Identify **how** you will communicate including establishing preferred method and preferred time.
- Know what methods are available to you and to them; be responsive to those preferences.
- Their preferred method and time may not be the same as yours.
- Ask what works best for them, try a few methods to get an initial response, and don't assume what works for one person will work for another.

2 Build Trust and Connection

- Trust is the foundation of relationships to accomplish shared goals and individual goals.
- As humans, we want to feel connected to others – to be listened to, heard, and respected.
- Take time to **ask how** they are doing, **not what** they are doing; show an interest in well-being, priorities, interests, milestones, strengths, challenges, and opportunities.
- Ask open-ended questions and use reflective listening.

3 Provide Guidance and Encouragement

- Help navigate the current environment by encouraging dialogue, time, and space to process.
- Hold space in conversations to talk about what is happening and what they are experiencing.
- Provide support and reassurance with the ups, downs, changes, challenges & celebrate accomplishments.
- Empathize by showing you understand needs and feelings – ***we are all doing the best we can.***

4 Be a Resource and Help Problem-Solve

- Help resolve issues or problems that could get in the way of achieving your goal.
- Be knowledgeable on how and where to access resources; make connections to those resources, and disseminate those resources through ***multiple communication methods.***
- Adapt materials for a virtual/hybrid environment so that they are more accessible and applicable.
- Research requests & follow-up if you don't know the answer. Don't forget to use a preferred method of communication for follow-up.

5 Promote Life Balance

- Encourage everyone to balance the various aspects of their lives – school, work, family, friends.
- Be mindful of where and how time is being spent.
- Carve out time for enjoyable activities, such as self-care, virtual connection, or socially distant walks, and ***encourage others to do the same.***
- Create a self-care list that can be used in new routines (see examples on page 2). Also, create traditions that are safe and fun in stressful situations.

Calm Palm Breathing Activity

1. Place your palm out.
2. Start at your thumb.
3. Trace up your finger and breath in.
4. Pause at the tip of your finger and think of something that makes you happy.
5. Trace down your finger and breathe out.
6. Repeat for each finger.



Guided Meditation Activities

- For free guided meditations by UCLA Health, [click here](#).