

## How School Closure Can Strengthen Your Family

**1 - Create some structure around work and school at home now.** Carving out specific times and places for us to work in the home when possible. Remind people of a sample daily home routine for work in the PreK-6 link on the GFPS website. Constant interruptions can contribute to stress. By putting structure to our days at home can allow us space for work and play.

**2 - Connecting with your people.** Social distancing is painful. We humans need social connection to feel safe. Those of us who live in families have a built-in way to counter the feelings of isolation that social distancing can cause. We can hug our kids and tickle their backs. We can share our meals together—all of them. We can relax and read and watch our shows on the same couch in the same room. This sort of old-fashioned family time isn't the norm. These days it seems more natural to eat lunch alone in front of the computer. Kids today are more likely to watch videos on their devices alone than they are to join the family for an episode of TV. But we'll do well to counter the distancing we're experiencing from our broader school and work communities by deepening our connections to one another at home. Let's not be *alone* together; let's be together when we're together.

**3. Embrace not being so busy.** Have you recently complained that you can't find time to exercise? That you're sleep-deprived? That you don't have time to cook healthy food? With no athletic events and no commute and no pickups and drop-offs, we parents have a lot more time on our hands. This is likely to be unsettling at first. We in the U.S. feel important rushing from one commitment to the next. Busyness makes us feel significant. Having more time to take care of ourselves can feel indulgent in a time when sacrifice is called for. But one of the best things that we can do for *others* is take care of ourselves. We can better ward off illness when we are mentally and physically healthy, and this puts us in a much better position to help others.

Erin Butts  
Student Mental Health Coordinator  
Great Falls Public Schools  
2400 Central Ave  
Great Falls, MT 59401  
Email: [erin\\_butts@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:erin_butts@gfps.k12.mt.us)  
Phone: 406-268-6771