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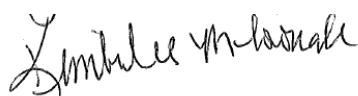
During this challenging time, in our world with so many changes, we are faced with so much uncertainty for us all. This whirlwind of circumstances has created a laundry list of emotions for everyone seemingly overnight. We all have had to learn to adapt to new things, to become and remain flexible, realize and embrace our 'new normal'. As a family with extra needs, we want to share some tips and suggestions to help cope with all of these changes.

We know our children will remember how they felt during this time more than what they learned academically. So we chose to focus on self-care, slowing down and strengthening our family's relationships. We are not enforcing strict "homeschooling" for eight hours per day. We know their education is very important, so we are encouraging each family member to engage on their unique interests and allowing their sense of wonder to reignite.

We are spending our time connecting and healing by prioritizing our own self-care. Keeping bedtimes routines, making healthiest food choices possible, getting outside to move and connect with nature are essential to our families wellbeing. Also, we are playing board games, working on puzzles, going on "dates" with each child separately, we are focusing on making new memories and documenting old memories.

We are focused on our mental wellbeing by doing 'check-ins' with each family member and providing a safe place for our new normal of tele-health, and making time for hard conversations and sharing our concerns openly. We are striving to remain socially connected with friends and family scheduling google hangouts or Zoom sessions and still celebrating special occasions and milestones; they just look differently. Every day we are practicing thankfulness and looking for the good that is sometimes hard to see. We are looking for opportunities to help meet other families' needs in our neighborhood by making or sharing what we have with others. This alone is teaching our children the priceless skills of caring for ourselves and others.

We cannot stop the changes impacting our families, but we can support one another by being present and proactive by giving more hugs, and embracing this slow down to strengthen our family's well-being and mental health.



Kimberlee Coronado (front right) with her family. Kimberlee has been a voice for lived experience with OCMH since 2014

