



## **UAS WELLNESS TEAM**

**June 3, 2020**

**From our Nurse Elisa:**

### **How to stress less during the period of transition**

Stress is not necessarily a bad thing. Stress prepares our bodies for challenging situations. The heart rate increases. Hormone levels elevate. It activates our bodies to give their best, especially in times of uncertainty and change. We often think of stress as something to avoid, but stress can sometimes be positive. It can feel like excitement or anxiety. It can serve to heighten our awareness during a challenging new situation, or it can stop us on our roads.

- **View stress as a challenge, not a threat:** Rather than let a particular life change overwhelm you, turn it into something you can rise above.
- **Appreciate change:** Getting stuck in ruts throughout life is normal because nobody really likes change. However, it can harm your cognitive growth. When we switch up our routines, we stimulate our nervous systems so that new neural pathways are created.
- **Recall previous transitions:** By remembering previous changes you've dealt with successfully, you can use that power to face the new challenge. Use it as a source of strength: you did it before, you can do it again!
- **Use your supports:** Having a network of friends, co-workers and family can provide you with the social support you need to manage change effectively. Even an online community can give you much-needed emotional support.
- **Share feelings as a family:** Openly discuss your expectations, hopes and fears as a family, and emphasize to your child that it's normal to have feelings of doubt as well as excitement! Being honest about your own feelings reminds children they're not alone, and that their own perspective is part of a larger family dynamic. However, if you have any concerns about your child, try to keep these to yourself and focus instead on being constructive and optimistic about their ability to overcome their fears and doubts.



- **If you're moving to another country:** Make sure the whole family has an opportunity to say goodbye to friends, favourite locations and anyone or anything that has been special. As a family, talk about what you're grateful for in the time you've had to get to know the place. Saying goodbye allows space for new beginnings.
- **Draw on the resources of the new school:** Alert the school of any important allergies, disabilities or special learning needs that your child might have.
- **Prioritize relationships with friends and family.**
- **[Click here for more ideas on how to cope with stress](#)**

*Sources: Children's Colorado Hospital and International School Parent*

## **From our Elementary Counselor Marisa**

The end of the school year is coming and it's time for changes and time for new opportunities. In this new modality of distance learning, it is still important to make time to say goodbye and to recognize our friendships and our time in Uruguay.

In order to say hello to a new person or place, you have to say goodbye to the one you left. It is time to say goodbye to those students and families that will leave UAS over the holiday break. If you are in that situation, please be sure that the school is aware of your departure plans and take the opportunity to discuss these issues with your child.

The easiest way to remember what's needed for healthy closure is to imagine building a **R.A.F.T.**

**Reconciliation/Repair:** Any time we face a move from one place to another, it is easy to deal with tensions in relationships by ignoring them. We think "In 2 weeks, I will be gone and never see that friend again anyway. Why bother to resolve this misunderstanding"?

Unfortunately, when we refuse to resolve interpersonal conflicts, two things can happen. First, we are so focused on how good it will be to get away from this problem that we not only skip over the reconciliation needed for good closure but also ignore the total process of closure and don't move on to building the rest of the RAFT. Second, the difficulties don't go away when we move. Instead, as we leave, we carry with us our mental baggage of unresolved problems. Obviously, true reconciliation depends on the cooperation and response of the other party, but we need to try to do what we can to achieve this resolution.

**Affirmation:** Expressions of appreciation and encouragement for friendship, contributions and expectations provide the base that enables individuals to recognize the value of the past and embrace the legitimate hope that the enjoyed relationships have a future. It communicates the message that..."When we meet again, even years later, we shall still be friends bound by common memories and experiences".

**Farewell:** Making a list of significant people, places, pets, and possessions and the appropriate ways to say goodbye to each one is important. Help your kids say goodbye to people by writing notes, baking cookies, having a Zoom or Google meet party, phone call, anything that acknowledges the importance of that relationship and says “Thank you for being a special person in my life, I’ll miss you.” Of course, people are the most important, but taking photos to help you remember places, making satisfactory arrangements for the pets and disposing of your possessions are all important markers for the leaving portion of transition.

**Think Destination:** Make an effort as you are saying goodbye to also think realistically about the new destination. What are some of the things to look forward to? Try to develop realistic but positive expectations for one’s new life and location because it helps to minimize anxiety and disappointment. Make an effort to find as much information and share it with your children, so that the excitement of going to a new place can provide some balance to the heaviness of leaving.

Additionally, those of us who remain here will experience the transition of these families moving away. You can prepare for this period of transition and change by talking about your feelings and finding ways to have a meaningful goodbye with friends that may be moving. You will be able to help them recognize their feelings and focus on those positive aspects and things that friends have brought to our life. Help the kids learn and grow from these experiences by becoming flexible and open mind students.

UAS families, you might feel a little overwhelmed during this part of the year. Please know that we want to support you. Let me know if you or your child will appreciate a check-in with me. You can contact me by email [mcao@uas.edu.uy](mailto:mcao@uas.edu.uy) anytime, we can coordinate a meeting or just see how we, from UAS, can help you.

### **From our Secondary Counselor Michele Werlin:**

Keeping a gratitude journal has been shown to improve mental health and happiness over time. During quarantine, many of us were lucky enough to be healthy. However, it was stressful to be in the house day in and day out and do not have any personal independence. Now, more than ever is a great time to start a gratitude journal. There are many tips for having a gratitude journal that is psychologically helpful and inspiring: include pictures in the journal, write down dates/times of happiness and joy, and include quotes from others that made you feel happy. [Here is a helpful video by Oprah](#), where she explains her method for keeping a gratitude journal and an article on helpful journaling tips.

For more information, you can always get in touch with me at [mwerlin@uas.edu.uy](mailto:mwerlin@uas.edu.uy). Stay safe and healthy!