



March 13, 2022

*"May the blessing of each day be the blessings you need most."*

*"May the light always find you on a dreary day."*

*-Saint Patrick*

March 17<sup>th</sup> is St. Patrick's Day. This Irish Saint was known for his quotes on life and God and inspired many people with his beautiful words. Saint Patrick's Day commemorates his life, and it also celebrates the Irish culture.

Yesterday, Dr. Henry updated the new Covid-19 guidelines. As promised, OLM will not be changing our protocols except for the use of the Personal Protective Equipment. In April, we will review the OLM protocols such as play spaces, the use of plexiglass for small groups, assemblies etc.

In terms of the Personal Protective Equipment, the decision to wear a mask or face covering is a personal choice. We are a Christian environment and will respect and support each student and staff member's choice to wear a mask or not.

Many people, weary of the pandemic and its restrictions, gratefully welcomed the news Dr. Henry stated yesterday, however, the sense of relief is not universal.

In particular, children may worry about yet another change in the "rules." After all, children have been consistently spoken to about the importance of mask wearing. Younger children may even have trouble recalling a mask-free world.

Here are some tips for establishing the new social rules that can help you and your children reduce stress and anxiety.

1. Help children anticipate that mask protocol will differ based on the situation and the people involved. There will still be places where kids will be required to wear masks, like a doctors' or dentist office. However, masks will be optional in other places such as schools, sports and other social venues. Knowing what to expect can reduce stress.
2. Help your child anticipate times when he or she may feel uncomfortable. Decisions about mask wearing are personal, so it makes sense that different situations may feel uncomfortable for different people. The key to each is to anticipate problems by asking ahead and searching for solutions such as physically distancing, masking for a short time or excusing yourself from the event or situation.

3. Emphasize that circumstances change but the principles remain the same. To help children feel less anxious about changing guidelines, emphasize that we all need to observe the same consistent rules: a) Do what's safe for you and others, b) Think ahead about different situations, c) when unclear ask for guidance. Even if the rules about mask wearing change again, the process of following these three key steps can remain stable constant in the lives of children.
4. Be respectful, kind and caring about others' decisions regarding their comfort and safety. Remind your children that mask decisions can be personal and context-driven. Avoid language that is judgmental.
5. Monitor your children's anxieties. It's the cascade of changes that takes its toll on a person. Take time to check in with your children about their feelings.

May God bless you and keep you safe. Have a wonderful Spring Break!