



February 2021

Staying Strong

The year 2021 holds promise as we look to the future and hope for brighter times, yet the year 2020--while challenging for many of us--still lingers with its fear and worries. As a former history teacher, the events that took place this past fall and winter were a roller-coaster. We experienced lows ranging from our democratic institutions being undermined and the deaths of some of our most cherished civil rights icons to the highs of a presidential inauguration showing hope and inspiration of a young girl, descended from slaves, reciting before a president and the world at only the age of 22. All of this occurred while in the background the world suffered from a once in a century pandemic taking away many of our loved ones.

As I write this and reflect, I think back to some of the stories my grandmother told me of growing up during the Battle of Britain. A highlight of the year was when the children each received an orange as their Christmas present. Certainly, those times were no less bleak. Yet they managed to survive and get through it to better times and reached the light at the end of their tunnel. We know that the light is coming for us to end our dark times and pray that it is close at hand. Until that light shines, things remain tough on us and our children.

Our recent dark times have tested the strongest among us and have caused the educator in me to worry about our children. It is difficult for us to tell them not to worry, that things will be all right when times are still bleak and, indeed, we are still worried. Our gifted children are keen observers, are absorbing all of this and need our support. Below are a few things to keep in mind as we support them and ourselves through this trying, and hopefully dissipating, section of our history.

It is OK not to Know the Answers

Gifted children know the questions to ask to get at what we are thinking. They also know when they are being placated. Just be honest with them. You do not have to highlight the ugly, but you can be honest and upfront when talking to them. Show them



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that you trust them enough to tell them the truth and that you care enough to support them through anything.

Encourage Them to get Involved and Do Something Positive for Others

They will not feel as helpless if they are helping to make a difference. Even small things like helping a neighbor, sewing masks, adopting a pet from the shelter, cleaning up a local park, doing volunteer work, etc. will let them have some control and perspective.

Encourage Them to Do Something Good for Themselves

Physical and mental health has never been more important. Bring in some arts, get creative, take the dog for a walk, try some yoga, and practice mindfulness. It all helps. Also, don't forget to do this yourself!

Look to History and Strong Examples of Character

Humans have been through many bleak periods. Many groups and individuals have suffered only to come out stronger. I am writing this during Black History Month, and it probably has been years since I was so inspired by such a person as when I listened to Amanda Gorman at Joseph Biden's inauguration. History is full of stories of perseverance: Joe Biden, Milala Yousafzai, John Lewis, and the great Ruth Bader Ginsburg are just a few who come to mind. We can all learn from them.

Most Importantly, Please Keep Communicating with Your Children

Never have our personal relationships mattered more. Being isolated and worried about what is going on is not healthy for anyone, let alone a sensitive child. Keep them involved. Let them watch the news, but also watch the news with them and encourage reflection, discussion, and perspective. Show your children your interest in them and your love for them.

I am honored to be able to join this wonderful organization's Board of Directors. It allows me to do my part to help and to feel like I am contributing to the better good. All of us at



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SENG hope that you are finding the inspiration and support to not only get through these times but also to support those around you and those who look up to you . Even if it is something as simple as the gift of an orange, we can all find inspiration, do some good, and work our way through the bleakness. (Click here to find out more about SENG Model Parent discussion groups in order to further support your gifted child.)

Adam C Laningham is on SENG's Board of Directors, is the Arizona Liaison for SENG, and chairs the Liaison Committee (Click here to discover who is the Liaison in your state). Adam has over 20 years of experience in the field of education. He is the Manager of Gifted & Advanced Academics for Deer Valley Unified School District, a large, diverse school district in the Phoenix area providing a wide range of services to over 5,000 gifted identified students. Adam was recognized as the 2014 Arizona Gifted Teacher of the Year, he has taught at several schools, multiple grade levels and ran numerous gifted programs. Adam has served on the Board of Directors for the Arizona Association for Gifted & Talented for many years, is an international speaker, consultant, and published author.

- *Adam C Laningham*