

## BVPAGE Q& A

What about all of the devices? iPads, phones, computers - all distract. The more exposure my girls (grades 4 & 6) have to these electronics, the worse their behavior and the longer it takes to complete homework because it's too easy to switch apps and read a book instead. I hate these devices. Is there a positive way to use them? I want to revoke all access. All.

This is a HUGE problem. If you live in Johnson County, the latest publication they send out periodically had a good article about the problems with screens and the impact they have on executive functions. I feel for parents and I am very lucky my kids were not little when this problem started. But even adults need to be aware of the addictive potential and how this impacts us in almost every realm of our lives....and we are ADULTS! Kids cannot be expected to manage what many adults cannot manage. I highly recommend very limited use and for very specific tasks. Use for entertainment is fine, but MUST be limited with kids. Sorry...I'm afraid I don't have an easy solution...if I did, I would be rich.

What if your child has no "love" (interests, what I love to do, etc)?

Interests can come and go, but if you can look instead for strengths, you will find areas that will more likely engage your child. The VIA Character Strengths assessment is a great place to start. It's free and there is a youth version for kids 10 and up. I would read their information (lots of good stuff!) and also their definitions of each of the strengths, as these can be a little different than what one commonly may think. It is available at [viacharacter.org](http://viacharacter.org).

What if your child is ALWAYS stressed (doctor-tested cortisol levels elevated all the time)?

Chronic stress can cause MANY health issues and also hijacks the parts of our brain that drive executive functions. It is critical to look at the cause of the stress and quickly find ways to reduce the pressure (think "quick release" on an Instant Pot pressure cooker.) Often, chronic stress needs to be decreased through lifestyle changes and self-care (or parent-care) in the areas of sleep, nutrition, exercise and general health practices. In my opinion it requires everyone working with the child to be on board with helping...teachers, parents, physicians, etc. and may require private therapy or coaching.

How does one qualify for/get a "Digby"?

Digby is a certified service dog. To qualify for a service dog, you have to have a disability that the dog can help mitigate. I had to have a letter from a physician stating this. Then the dog has to be specially selected, trained, and tested to do tasks that help with that disability. I have diabetes and Digby alerts to blood sugar highs and lows, and I have an inner ear disease and he helps with balance. I used to have severe anxiety and panic attacks, and he alerted to early signs of these conditions as well.

**Do you have strategies for calming the brain when the amygdala has flipped and the house is on fire?**

There are many self-regulation strategies. Taking a good, deep belly breath (or two or three!) from the diaphragm is a very powerful first-line strategy. This gets oxygen to the prefrontal cortex and allows us to begin to regulate. I personally also give my brain a logical task to do, as it is very difficult for our brains to do an emotional task (freak out) and a logical task (counting backwards by fours from 100) at the same time.

**How do we help our daughter sleep? She is always worried about her work and will typically find excuses not to go to bed.**

I am not a sleep expert, but putting calming routines and structures into place is often helpful. Ask HER what calms HER brain down and let her create some strategies. Lighting, music, scented oils, a warm bath before bed, reading a book, drawing/coloring, etc. are what many people like. Try to keep the schedule as consistent as possible i.e. "You don't have to go to sleep, but it is time to get in bed, turn out lights, set the time and color for 10 minutes, etc." You can also talk to your child's physician about melatonin or other things.

**What are some good strategies to help out 2nd grade daughter keep track of things she takes to school - coat, hat, take home folder, shoes...?**

I have helped students create lists and make "luggage tags" to attach to their backpack. They can be made with words, pictures, etc. Also, ask her what she should look like when it is time to leave, and even take a picture of her "ready to go." Starting with the "end in mind" is always a good way to plan anything, even just leaving the house.

**My kid is allergic to dogs. How is he going to work with a service dog?**

I'm not real clear on this question, so I'll answer from a couple of perspectives.

If he is allergic to dogs, he probably wouldn't use a service dog personally (see above about people who qualify for service dogs.) Although...my first job in high school was with a vet who was allergic to dogs AND cats, so nothing is impossible!

If you are asking about your son working with someone else who has a service dog, then there is probably not an issue. Dog dander, according to allergists, is EVERYWHERE, and that is what most people are allergic to. It gets tracked into classrooms, grocery stores, restaurants, etc. on shoes, coats, clothing, etc. so he is probably exposed everywhere he goes. When I worked at a school with professional therapy dogs, as well as service dogs, I worked closely with the school nurse to know which students had dog allergies. In all the thousands of students I worked with while I had a dog, none of them were so allergic I couldn't go into the classroom. That significant of allergy is extremely rare and the person would probably be impacted by the dander that is already present in almost every environment. I have clients who have various degrees of dog allergies, and I make sure to vacuum well before they come.

The most severely allergic people I have worked with, at my office or in schools, just avoid petting my dogs, or some wash their hands after they pet.

FYI...because service dogs have public access (just like a wheelchair) to assist a person with a disability, they are, by law, allowed access to most places the public can go. I even took my dog into ICU at a hospital. If there is someone in the same facility that is allergic to dogs to the point it is considered a disability, then BOTH individuals have to be provided accommodations. In most cases however, allergies do not usually meet the legal definition of a "disability." And FYI...there has been a lot of press about emotional support animals and these are NOT service dogs. They are allowed to travel on airlines with documentation, but they do NOT have public access. Fake service dogs are another whole issue and significantly create dangers for the public and for people who have legitimate service dogs. But I'll stop at that, as Digby may ant any moment start alerting to my developing anxiety!!