During current challenges of the COVID virus with digital learning, teleworking and social isolation, the lives of individuals and families are dramatically different! Here are some tips to help you thrive during challenging times:

* Pay attention to what you are thinking. Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. You can control you thinking by “changing the channel on your brain!” (*Philippians 4:8)*
* Realize that we are all experiencing loss through this challenge and it takes time to adjust to the “new normal.” The stages of grief/loss are:
* SHOCK & DENIAL- You will probably react to learning of the loss with numbed disbelief.
* PAIN & GUILT
* ANGER & BARGAINING
* "DEPRESSION", REFLECTION, LONELINESS
* THE UPWARD TURN
* RECONSTRUCTION & WORKING THROUGH
* ACCEPTANCE & HOPE

These stages do not necessarily go in order and vary in intensity at times. An analogy for grief is that it is like the ocean. At first, the waves knock you over. In time, the waves become less intense. Then waves may suddenly become intense again. (*Psalms*)

* Develop schedules and routines for eating, sleeping, studying, working, etc. If you work or learn from home, build in breaks.
* Set boundaries with family members. Deal with conflict in healthy ways.
* Deal with fear by confronting it. Develop strategies to deal with fear. Push yourself through challenges rather than “giving into fear.” Trust God. *(Proverbs 3:5-6 & Psalm 46)*
* Take time for prayer, reading the Bible and self-reflection. Keep a daily gratitude journal. Have a daily devotion time and prayer with family.
* Exercise every day for at least 30 minutes for adults and at least an hour a day for children. Take a walk, ride a bike or participate in YouTube exercise videos.
* Read a book or magazine. Play word games or other activities to stimulate your mind.
* Limit the news and time on electronic devices. Be a positive role model for children by limiting personal screen time. (Note: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours on devices for children between 2

- 18 years old. <https://screenstrong.com/how-much-screen-time-is-okay-during-the-quarantine/?inf_contact_key=1bd097240be4ec66ae98a933920d3e14> )

* Develop a new interest or skill.
* Have FUN! Play board games, cook and enjoy meals together, play outdoor games like cornhole or badminton, etc.
* Enjoy music, singing and/or playing an instrument, even if you think you have no talent.
* Connect with family and friends through phone calls, emails, letters, social media or Zoom. This is especially important when feeling isolated or disconnected.
* Spread kindness, especially for those who are serving our community, struggling financially or feeling lonely.
* Know when to get help for yourself or those you love. Reach out to a pastor, counselor, Stephen’s minister or helpline for available resources.

*Tips compiled by L. Kay Stanley, Licensed Professional Counselor with Thrive Counseling Services in Suwanee, GA who has worked with children and their families for over 30 years in both a school and private practice setting.*