

# Smart Love® Newsletter



## Smart Love Continues to Serve

During the COVID-19 Crisis, Smart Love Family Services is continuing to provide our high-quality and much needed services to the community. Our Smart Love ideal of building caregiving relationships with one another and with the families and children we serve has never been more important, and we are delivering on it despite the challenges.

In a matter of days, we shifted to providing all of our in-person services online or by phone. Our therapists continue to connect and care for their clients by providing telehealth services using HIPAA compliant platforms. Our Minority Family Program is using a private text application to communicate. And our Therapeutic Tutoring service is providing its rich academic support for students via video conferencing.

The Natalie G. Heineman Smart Love Preschool's teaching staff is providing its curriculum of in-home directed learning activities, sing-a-longs, and support to our preschool families via email and video conferencing. The in-home activities, called "The Magic Basket," offers games and arts & crafts filled with learning opportunities, like "I-Spy Something Blue." With

these activities, teachers also provide language for parents to use with their children that encourages discovery and exploration, like "I wonder how many blue things you found?" Like all activities in the preschool classrooms, the at-home activities are inherently engaging but also allow the child freedom to choose to participate which helps to build agency and a positive relationship with school and learning.

To the broader community, Smart Love is providing parenting support via online parent forums, our website, social media, and email communications. We are offering free online 'Ask an Expert' forums to answer parents' questions on how to talk to their children about the crisis.

With over 70 parents tuning in recently, Senior Smart Love therapist Dr. Zakalik answered questions like "How do I explain to my kids how long we have to stay at home, while not worrying them?" You can watch the video on our website in the Parenting Support section. We have also created a "Magic Basket" page on our website providing the at-home activities created by Smart Love teachers so any family can access this great resource.

During these uncertain times, we will continue to adapt to evolving needs and will continue to fulfill our core mission: to help children and families enhance their inner well-being.

### Generous Hearts Heal. Donate Today.

Your support is essential to care for all those who come to us affected by COVID-19. Whether it's funding counseling for families contending with great anxiety, fear, and grief or providing learning resources for parents who are at home with their children, every dollar counts – and allows us to convert your generosity into healing. Visit [www.smartlovefamily.org/smart-love-donations](http://www.smartlovefamily.org/smart-love-donations).

## NEWS



### GENEROUS HEARTS HEAL

Support Local Families in This Time of Need

### SMART LOVE'S VIRTUAL GALA 2020

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2020 | 7:30 P.M.

Your generosity is vital for ensuring children and families get the care and services they need to heal and move forward. Visit <https://smartlove.givesmart.com> for registration, silent auction, and program details.

## Westlake Health Foundation funds Minority Family Program

Smart Love was awarded a new grant of \$15,000 from the Westlake Health Foundation in support of our uniquely innovative Minority Family Program (MFP), now entering its fifth year of service to the community. The Foundation's funding for the program is enabling residents of Proviso Township to participate. We are deeply grateful for this investment in our work and the enhancement of the MFP that this grant will help make possible.

Based at our clinic in Oak Park, the MFP has to date engaged more than 80 families in its activities, which center on biweekly parent and youth group meetings, along with optional individual 1:1 parent coaching and youth therapy sessions. Along with this new grant, the totally free-of-charge MFP has been made possible by the support of several funding partners during its years of operation, especially the Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township (CMHB), which has just renewed funding to provide MFP services for eligible Oak Park residents.



The MFP's flexibility is an important factor in its success and, during the COVID-19 crisis, when the families are unable to gather in person. The participants are keeping in touch and continuing to receive support through a private WhatsApp group and through video. Adding to its potential impact, Smart Love is beginning to develop a new Spanish-language version of the program for a debut later in the year. Stay tuned for more news on this exciting expansion of our work to help minority families be even more resourced and empowered to support and guide their children.

## COMMUNITY UPDATE

### Therapeutic Tutoring—Online Support for Children's e-Learning

As we adjust our lives in response to the mandated protections against COVID-19, children too are needing to quickly adapt as schools close their doors and turn to other methods to meet their learning objectives. With these changes parents may notice their child struggling with their school work, perhaps becoming easily frustrated, lacking motivation, or unable to focus. These emotional reactions are normal responses to what is going on, as children may be feeling sad because they miss their friends, teachers, routines, family members, or activities.

Smart Love launched a new service last fall that is uniquely suited to address these concerns—Therapeutic Tutoring. While originally designed to be provided in person, we are fortunate to be able to offer these services remotely which allows us to sustain the service during this crisis.

Our therapeutic tutors are trained to help children address their emotions surrounding learning and school while providing academic support. By helping children understand their feelings, they are freed from their emotional distractions and more available to learn. Parents will notice a greater capacity to cope with frustrations and challenges, increased motivation, improved concentration, and an overall more enjoyment in learning.



Therapeutic Tutoring is offered year-round, children can continue to work on their skills over the summer and be ready when school starts up again in the fall!

**We offer online sessions and have immediate tutoring openings; please call 773.665.8052 ext. 4 to schedule a confidential telephone appointment to discuss your child's needs.**



### How to Talk to Your Kids about the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating dislocations, upsets, and reactions that affect people of every age, requiring us all to take care of our own and our children's emotional and physical well-being. The Smart Love approach offers an effective way to talk to children to help them understand what is going on without overwhelming them. The main goal during this time is to reduce children's anxieties and reinforce their sense of safety. And because children understand traumatic events differently than adults, understanding where a child is developmentally is crucial to knowing what information is appropriate to share with them.

Many children hearing about COVID-19 are naturally concerned about their families' health and safety. Parents can most effectively calm these worries by explaining that their child's health is their top priority and to ensure them that they are safe. It is very important to take children's feelings seriously and not dismiss them. Research shows that this has tremendous value in the development of children's self-esteem and positive parent/child communications.

As Martha Heineman Pieper, Ph.D. and William J. Pieper, M.D. note in *Smart Love Solutions in Early Childhood*, it is best to "not overwhelm children with information. When giving children bad news, it is always best to give bare facts followed by reassurance... then follow their lead about how much more they are ready to hear."

However in this day and age, children are always consuming information, and it's impossible to totally filter their intake of TV and Internet to keep them from hearing all the news about deaths, fears, and disruptions. So the single greatest support that parents can provide is to be there, available to hear and respond to the questions and concerns they express. When parents provide closeness, listen to their child's feelings and fears, and offer lots of comfort, they are not only helping children move past their scared feelings, but also modeling how to handle stressful situations by getting help from loved ones.

Explaining why playgrounds are closed, why they cannot go visit their grandparents, or hang out at their friends' homes can seem very daunting. But

underscoring that the reason all these rules are in place is to keep them safe helps them accept why this is happening.

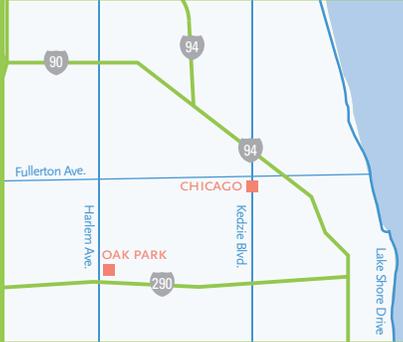
Because older children have a greater ability to process and contextualize news and events, parents can help their teen process what is going on by being an active listener. Adolescents may be resistant to what they see as unfair restrictions but engaging them in conversations about the pandemic, efforts to contain it, and how it is affecting them is helpful to ensure they are getting factual information and avoiding unhealthy ideas. Helping teens express their emotions provides an outlet for their stress, frustrations, or anxiety and brings your relationship closer.

**For more information and guidance on how to talk with children about COVID-19 and enduring all that the pandemic is causing, we encourage you to follow Smart Love author Dr. Martha Heineman Pieper on Twitter: @MHPieperPHD.**



# SMART LOVE<sup>®</sup> FAMILY SERVICES

Natalie & Ben Heineman Smart Love Center



## OUR LOCATIONS

Chicago • Oak Park



## TO LEARN MORE VISIT

[www.smartlovefamily.org](http://www.smartlovefamily.org)

[www.smartlovepreschool.org](http://www.smartlovepreschool.org)

## Smart Love Programs

### COUNSELING SERVICES

- Therapy for Children, Adolescents, and Adults
- Play Therapy for Young Children
- Support Groups for Children and Adults
- Neuro-Psychological and Psychological Testing
- Couples and Family Counseling
- Minority Family Program

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Natalie G. Heineman  
Smart Love Preschool

- Preschool and Kindergarten for Children 2-6 years
- Parent and Child Toddler Explorations for Children 12-36 months
- Toddler and Parent Play Times
- Summer Camp

### LEARNING SERVICES

- Psycho-Educational and Learning Evaluations
- Therapeutic Tutoring
- Customized Parent Consultation

### PARENTING

- Parenting Guidance and Counseling
- Parenting Seminars
- Publications and Resources for Parents

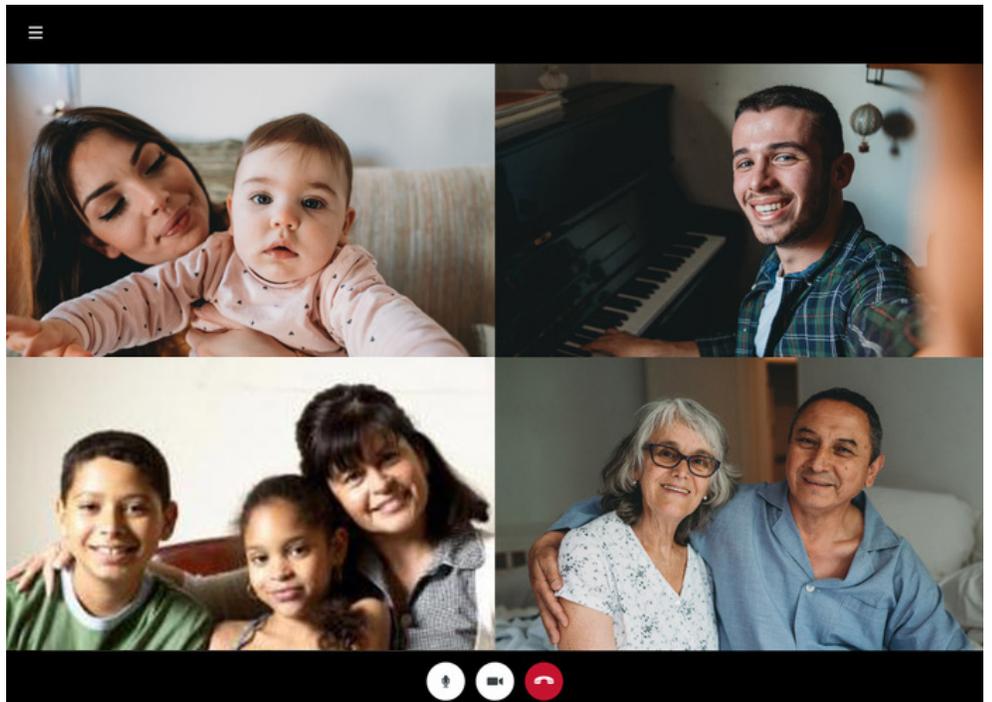
## Our Donors: Their generosity is providing critical services in this time of need

In any year, our foundation, corporate, and — above all — individual donors make it possible for Smart Love to go above and beyond in service to the children and families who rely on us. And this spring, with all the turmoil and dislocation of COVID-19, our donors' generosity is more important than ever before.

Financial contributions from our donors allow us to respond to increased demands from those who have lost loved ones or employment, for those with growing anxieties about the economy, dealing with isolation, deep concerns about the health and safety of their family, or the frustrations surrounding how life has changed so suddenly.

We have never been more thankful than now for our donors whose generosity helps families who are struggling with the impact of the pandemic on their lives.

Your support helps families cope with today and be prepared for tomorrow.



The Smart Love Approach was developed by Martha Heineman Pieper, Ph.D., and William J. Pieper, M.D., and is described in their book *Smart Love*. The Natalie G. Heineman Smart Love Preschool offers classes for three to six year olds, and parent and child programs for children six weeks to 36 months. Smart Love Family Services provides counseling for children and families based on the Piepers' therapeutic approach, Inner Humanism<sup>®</sup>. Parenting programs include private parent coaching, educational seminars (co-sponsored by the Intrapsychic Humanism Society), parent training and support programs, and publications. © 2020 Smart Love Family Services is an Illinois-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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