Hello Everyone,

It's safe to say that we're all living through something that we've only ever seen in the movies. A virus has forced most of us into self quarantine in order to stay safe. When you do venture out in the world, it's a great deal quieter than it once was, as places that were once crowded with people are nearly, or entirely, empty. It's like something out of Will Smith's *I Am Legend*.

Of course, it's not really like that. Most of us that are stuck at home are just binge watching the NFL games or playing a lot of video games. But Will Smith himself knows that the way this time really was, and the way we might all remember it, are likely to be very different. The actor shared a popular meme that's been going around social media that implies that in a few years we'll likely be treating this period like we were all survivors of a real apocalypse.

These last 5 weeks have been surreal. We have gone from hugs and hands on to “Please get online” and “Are you getting enough to eat?” Laughing and fist pumping when the Cubs won the Pennant (it happened). We all thrive on being with people, seeing them, talking with them face to face. We read their expressions, we read their body language, we know when someone is down, we know when they are happy.

Over the last month we haven’t been able to see each other’s faces, read their body language or even know if someone needed a helping hand. Today, we might run into the grocery store trying to stay away from other human beings, pick up lunches on the doorstep of the school and drop them at the doorstep of our students with little if any human contact. No smiling face, no grumpy face, or ability to hold someone when they are crying.

The first month of this was our SPRINT. We were all adjusting to how we get things done, operationalizing our new day to day to lives. The next few months will be the MARATHON. I encourage you to share what you are doing and to stay in contact. Please plan ways to socialize virtually. Have Virtual morning meetings or end of day recaps. My family has had a virtual party every Saturday night. We are using Zoom and House Party. You can play games on these apps, argue, laugh, and socialize. A word of caution, learn how to use the apps before you pop into a party you weren’t invited to. I accidentally interrupted my daughter-in-law’s House Party with her family in Ireland. I heard that several of the schools have been doing morning dance exercises and some are having virtual Happy
Hour well done! My point being PLEASE STAY CONNECTED!! Bake a cake and drop off at someone's house. Bake cookies for someone's birthday and drop it off. Don't stop doing what you do. Just might look a little different!

Each of you have a special gift; it might be that you work in the office keeping us all organized, or the nurse who tirelessly keeps us healthy, an amazing CIBS staff that children talk about being tough but fair and caring, the teacher whose children are always engaged, or the paraprofessional whose children gravitate to you because you care, the clinician who helps children with trauma, support staff who really run the buildings, or the administrator who treats all the children as if they are your own. This isn't done in isolation! The beauty of what we do at Menta is the work of the collective. None of us can do this alone. None of us want to work in isolation; we need each other. So I ask you to please, please STAY CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER. Complain about your administrators, complain about the CEO, complain about the kids, praise each other, praise your administrators and STAY CONNECTED. It is our strength!!

With deepest respect,

Dr. Beth Conran CEO/President The Menta Group