

Be Gentle With Yourself & Your Child

Dear Parents,

As you navigate working from home while helping your children stay busy and keep up with virtual schoolwork, you're surely accumulating some serious "parent points." This is really, really HARD!

In my role as a behavior specialist, one of the things I often say to parents that I believe is very important right now is, "Be gentle with yourself and your child. Be flexible." The world is turned upside down and our children need us to assure them that we will all be OK until it turns right side up again. At United Way, we are committed to being a resource for families in these difficult times. In the weeks to come, I will be providing ideas and strategies to help families with young children navigate life in these challenging days.

Routines, routines, routines. We all thrive when there is a routine to our days, especially our children. They are missing their school and childcare routine as much as we are missing our work routine. The first week of this COVID-19 emergency may have been fun, like an extended snow day. Now, it has become old, and everyone is craving order. Make time to sit down with your child and create a family schedule. Involve them as much as possible in the planning. Children will be more cooperative if they have participated in the creation of the schedule.

Let it go! Remember to be reasonable and kind to yourself. Use a schedule to keep routines in place, but if it's necessary to allow more TV time occasionally so that Mom or Dad can work at home, let it go. Use a timer to keep track of activities, try to create smooth transitions, and be willing to be flexible. This is a unique situation and we can allow ourselves to depart from the usual boundaries, as long as we get back to them when life returns to normal.

Exercise: Good for the body and the mind. Children and adults need the benefit of regular exercise more than ever. Maintaining social distance is important, but a walk is a safe and healthy activity that most people can participate in. Make it more fun for young children by giving them a task to complete or objects to find. A favorite outside game is a scavenger hunt, where children search for a variety of objects as they walk through their neighborhood. A great resource for scavenger hunts is <http://thebirdfeednyc.com/tag/scavenger-hunt/>. One of my favorites is the Neighborhood Search. It will keep your children busy for hours...and tire them out too!

Together we will get through this. Please remember to be kind to yourselves, and to your children. Take a bubble bath, listen to music, read a book, go for a run, and do other things to calm your soul. You need to fill your tank to be able to help your children fill theirs.

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3 Ways to Improve Your Home Routine & Keep Your Child Busy



Children's work

is their play.

**Children learn from
everything they do.**



1) Make a schedule.

The schedule should have structured time and free time. Keep meal times, wake up time, and bed time consistent from day to day. If possible, eat meals together, and make time to talk as a family. Include plenty of activity options in the schedule. Bored and frustrated kids are more likely to act up. Have your child select some daily activities that are meaningful to him and that he enjoys.

2) Include your child in household chores.

Give your child options and allow him to select a few chores that he will do at home. Keep the number and kinds of chores age appropriate. Select a variety of chores: some easy chores and a more challenging chore; some chores that need to be done every day and some chores that need to be done once a week, etc. Show your child, step by step, how you want each chore to be done. Encourage good work habits by checking that the chores are done, helping your child when he struggles, and praising him when he has done a good job.

3) Include self-care in your routine.

Make sure that your child continues to practice good hygiene at home. Bathing, brushing teeth, brushing hair, and frequent hand washing are important tasks for your child to practice every day. Also encourage your child to do enjoyable and relaxing activities like reading a book, listening to music, meditating, or engaging in a favorite hobby. These activities will help your child learn simple ways to take care of her physical, emotional, and mental health.

Helpful Websites

Parenting during Covid-19

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-parenting-tips#1>

<https://www.unicef.org/media/66146/file/COVID-19%20parenting%20tips.pdf>

Self-care & Exercise

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3262-young-children-at-home-during-the-covid-19-outbreak-the-importance-of-self-care>

<https://www.parents.com/fun/sports/exercise/10-ways-to-exercise-as-a-family/>