



## How to balance “crisis schooling” during COVID

Overnight, many of us have been thrown into the role of the primary educator for our children. While this has given us the opportunity to learn and be with our children, it can also feel overwhelming. Here are a few tips on how to cope:

**Crisis schooling versus home schooling:** Remember, we are “crisis schooling,” not “home schooling.” People who home school do not throw resources together overnight. They research curricula and thoughtfully create a program that meets the needs of their individual child. They have access to resources and planned communities.

During this unexpected COVID school closure, we do not have access to the same resources. We do not all have years of training and education on being an educator. So, first step? Give yourself some grace. We do our best when we focus on our strengths and recognize our own limitations. You do not have to be a substitute all the formal learning that happens in your child’s school. Even as schools come up with material and guidance you know what is feasible for your child. For some you may choose more structure and expect that assignments get done. For others you may do less than what the school is recommending, based on your family availability and how your child is coping.

**Marathon, not a sprint:** We may be in this role for a long time. Right now, there is a sense of urgency to get out there and “get learning.” Remind yourself that children often have a long break in summer months, so having them on a strict educational schedule right away or throughout the full duration may not be entirely necessary. Be thinking, what can I sustain over time? How can I balance educating my children with the rest of my responsibilities?

**Holding multiple roles:** In addition to parenting, many of us have recently become the primary educator, baker, cleaner, chef, repairman, first responder, gardener, or work from home breadwinner. Recognize that it is impossible to hold all of these roles perfectly. There is a reason why people have joined together in communities throughout the course of history- we do best when we work together and share responsibilities. The same can be true within your own household. What roles can you share with your children? How can you divide up responsibilities to teach community and responsibility?



**Focus on your strengths:** Many teachers get into teaching because it is an area of strength for them. They may love to watch kids grow, be able to hone in on the exact growth edge of their children. This is not the same for all of us. Instead of focusing on being the best educator in the traditional sense, think about your personal strengths. Do you love to cook? Love to read? Enjoy exercising? Like building things? Enjoy cleaning? How can you incorporate your strengths and home resources into nontraditional “learning” opportunities? For example, your children can read recipes with you and learn about measuring. They can help with a home improvement project. All of these have educational opportunities engrained in them, and do not need to become formal lessons to be important.

**Doing “all the things”:** There is an overwhelming amount of resources and information out there. It can feel confusing to know what to choose and what is right for you and your child. As a parenting unit, think about your priorities. Do you want your child to continue to maintain their growth in reading? Does your older child or teen have a particular educational goal. Recognize that there are a variety of ways to learn. It may be the perfect time to learn some life skills such as cooking, sewing, art, yardwork, building, or music. These things can be difficult to do in our normal days of rushing around. Pick 1-3 goals and prioritize what you want to focus on during this time. This will make it more manageable for you and for your child. In addition, don’t forget to intentionally plan and build into your learning goals activities that are fun, silly, or unexpected. Your kids will appreciate it when you let learning be off the wall and disinhibited—and it will help you all relieve stress.

**Be collaborative:** Things are changing so quickly right now that we all feel a bit out of control. Giving kids back some of that control by talking WITH them about what will work is ideal. Some kids may not have that conversation easily, and you may need to do a bit of talking each day. As you agree and live out one aspect of the “new normal” you can then move on to the next. Maybe start with establishing the sleep/wake routine or the self-care/chores routine. And then move on together to add in some physical health/activity. Regardless as you take it one step at a time the conversation about what is important to your child and to you helps you consider each other’s perspective and feel valued and cared for.

**Embrace the space:** Our previous world has been filled with busy-ness and schedules. Routine is important for children, but having some flex to that routine may be nice for everyone. Embrace this time and space- use our unexpected time together to play, enjoy each other’s company, and slow down. Recognize rituals or patterns that you are enjoying in your downtime and observe to your child what you see emerging.

**Connect:** We could all use some support right now. Connect with other “crisis schoolers” and help build each other up. It is not a competition or comparison- rather a way to create community in this time of COVID. There’s no one-size-fits-all so share tips and adjust for your particular family needs.

