



## Parenting During a Pandemic

### Day 2: Setting up for success: How to set up the new routines around staying at home with children

It's day 2 of the schools being closed so you may have started to get into some new routines already. If you are setting up some kind of home schooling, the most important thing to remember is that teachers take a long time to train to do what they do in the classroom everyday and if you look at social media, there are lots of them admitting to finding it tough to do at home with their own children. The official advice is not to try to replicate school as such but to try to motivate children to do some learning so we've put together a few tips which we hope will be helpful.

#### Practicalities:

- Set up a working area
  - Although there's a lot of advice about keeping things separate at home, it's important to think about your own child and their experience. If they are in a school where they sit at a desk and work, then a working area may be important. If they are at different stations for learning in the day then try to set up some "stations" rather than expecting them to sit at a table all day. The main thing is to try, where possible, to separate out the area they use when awake and the one you want them to settle down to sleep in. This is so that they can associate bed with sleep and are able to relax into sleep there.
- Setting up a timetable
  - Routines can create stability for children but remember that we are now to be home all day. It's important, then, to build in routines outside of learning time. It's good for our mental health to make sure we do the basics: get up, get dressed, get washed, eat, drink water, get some exercise.
- Take breaks
  - We all need breaks and beyond the classic snack time type breaks, children's attention spans mean they also need brain breaks.

- Remember to eat
  - Brains need food to function. That's child brains and adult brains!

#### **Anxieties:**

- Don't worry about thoughts about this being a strange situation!
  - It is a strange situation so you're likely to think about that sometimes. Remember that everyone else is thinking this too.
- Be realistic about what can be achieved
  - Parents can feel pressure during this time to recreate school, to support their child to keep up, to make sure home schooling is helpful and fun etc. If you put too much pressure on yourself, your children will pick up on this and nobody will be happy.
- Feeling you have to prove yourself
  - More pressure! Most parents feel pressure to be "good parents" and this is a time when we can feel we have to prove that we really can do it all. Well, there's enough pressure on us at the moment without this. If you pressure yourself too much you will become anxious and you will be less effective rather than more effective. We will cover what to do about feeling anxious in future blogs or you can check our other resources.

#### **Limit setting:**

You may already have some things that you tend to do around setting limits and boundaries and if this is the case then don't change things too much because it will be unsettling for everyone. If you are setting new limits, try to focus on what you can control. It may be helpful to keep video games and social media for after learning time but if you are using these things for learning then it may be difficult for children to understand the distinction between learning and leisure time. It may be helpful to talk about this so that children have an understanding. They may not like it though so to avoid ongoing issues over this, it may be helpful to set up limits early and manage the challenges around this now rather than set up to have to cope with this for the whole of the time at home.

One way to do this is to use lots of praise for the behaviours you want to see more of and planned ignoring for the behaviours you don't want to reinforce. If you start to argue about things you don't want children to do, they get a lot of attention for these behaviours and it actually reinforces them. Sounds funny but even negative attention from you is still attention and the behaviours you give most to will be reinforced.

## Rewards:

This was yesterday's theme so hopefully you found it helpful. We are just mentioning it here to reinforce yesterday's message but also to mention that it's not a bad idea to use rewards for yourself at this difficult time too. You don't need a sticker chart but a to do list where you have lots of ticks at the end of the day is motivating too.

We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing the first day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.

## Tomorrow's topic: Motivating children to want to learn while schools are closed

Please [contact us with questions, comments or topics](#) you'd like to see covered. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.