



Parenting during pandemic

Day 26: The new “normal” Overwhelmed or settling into parenting during pandemic?

When Politicians appear on TV to give updates on the pandemic at the moment, a number of them talk about the “new normal” they think may be in place after lockdown. The “new normal” for parents, however, is now as well as future focused. There is a “new normal” for family life at the moment and it will be different in different households. Today’s blog is about sustainability of the current “new normal” and what our current “new normal” means for the future. We have focused on what to do when there are issues in previous blogs but this is about thinking about how sustainable your coping is and how future proof it is even if there are no particular difficulties at present.

At the moment, many parents are overwhelmed with all of the tasks they have to attend to each day. Usually we are full time at work or full time at home, not both, and usually children are educated at school while home schooling is the “new normal” at present, with guidance from some teachers. With all of these things happening at once, it is easy to be overwhelmed. Added into the mix is the fact that we don’t have our typical coping strategies available. For example, we can’t look for someone to look after the children while we get some other things done.

If overwhelmed is the feeling we have right now, this might be causing difficulties. We can feel exhausted and start to think that we are not getting anything done or not as well as we would want to anyway. It may be, however, that the “new normal” **is** the feeling of being overwhelmed. Generally we are good at adapting to different situations. If we think back to being new parents, there may have been times of feeling overwhelmed but we adapt and manage these. At the moment, we may be coping within this feeling of being overwhelmed by telling ourselves that it’s temporary and it will change soon, similar to what we did as new parents. This idea of just keeping going may feel like surviving not thriving but we may accept this at present. One potential issue with feeling overwhelmed but just keeping going is that parents can head for burnout so it’s not really sustainable.

Alternatively, there may be a “new normal” at home that feels comfortable and enjoyable and better than before. We may be enjoying having so much time with our children and

always being there for them. We may be enjoying not having the rush to get out of the house in the morning and not having to manage the morning commute. This may be accompanied, though, with thoughts about how difficult it will be to move out of lockdown and back to the things we are enjoying not having to do right now. So there can be a sense of things being good right now but dread about the future.

All of this is essentially tied up in the fact that we don't know what is going to happen with the pandemic and/or lockdown but to try to make sense of it all, we are making assumptions, jumping to conclusions and trying to plan for the future as best we can in the face of massive uncertainty. Just as we are all trying to find ways of supporting our children through everything associated with coronavirus and lockdown, it is also important that we look after and support ourselves and each other as parents. If our current coping style is working but not sustainable, this may be something to think about. Equally, if our current coping style is working but causing dread about the future then this is potentially something else to think about. If you are just feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, tomorrow's blog will hopefully be helpful.

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

Tomorrow's topic: Exhausted! How to cope with feeling exhausted while parenting during the pandemic.

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.