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Working at Home While
Schooling Your Children:
Parenting's Latest Challenge

Presentation by:
MHN Training & Development

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Participant Guide

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Learning Objectives

- Have 'reasonable' expectations of yourself and others
- Be compassionate and empathetic
- Consider all resources for childcare/learning support
- Provide stability and predictability
- Do the best you can with remote learning
- Know when to seek help for children's anxiety
- Attend to your physical, mental and emotional health

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Current Challenges

What are some of the current challenges you face trying to work from home while your children are engaged in remote learning?

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Have Reasonable Expectations of Yourself

During COVID-19 pandemic have you:

- Communicated openly with your employer about unique challenges at home?
 - Negotiated changes in *how* to do your job as effectively as possible, while parenting/teaching?
- Adjusted your expectations of yourself?
 - Redefined your standards around parenting? Housework? Meals?
- Set reasonable expectations for yourself and your kids for remote learning?
- Sought a balance of shared responsibilities in the household, and contributions from all members?

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A Time for Compassion & Empathy

We are all dealing with many challenges and losses.

- Be compassionate towards yourself
- Show empathy towards your children
- Validate disappointments
- Listen without judgment
- Normalize anxiety
- Offer reassurance
- *What else?*

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Consider All Resources for Childcare and Learning Support

- Learning or 'pandemic' pods
 - Small group of students, parent led with rotating schedule
 - Small group of students, teacher or tutor led
- Babysitters or nannies
- High school or college students
- Older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and other family members
- Neighboring parents
- Community organizations: YMCA, boys and girl's clubs, daycare centers, local churches
- *What else?*

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Provide Stability and Predictability

- Set and follow regular bed and wake-up times
- Have a daily schedule
- Talk about the plan for the day
 - Schedule, assignments, breaks, being outside, exercise, etc.
- Establish rules and goals with your child
- Set expectations:
 - When can your child expect to spend time with you?
 - When should they avoid interrupting you?
 - What can they do in their downtime?
 - What if your child needs help?
- Strive to start and end your workday at consistent times

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Do the Best You Can with Remote Learning

1. Have a designated place for your child to do their work
2. Rely on a routine and adhere to a school schedule
3. Partner with your child's teacher(s)
4. Encourage self-direction
5. Have regular check-ins with your child
6. Set up and rely on systems to stay organized
7. Prioritize mental health support needs
8. Remain flexible - adapt to your child's unique needs
9. Connect with other parents
10. Use movement and humor

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Remote Learning Tips

- Elementary school students
- Middle school age students
- High school students
- Children with special needs

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Remote Learning for Elementary School Students

- Define a daily schedule and review expectations
 - When planning the day, try to include your child's input
 - For instance, if math is their hardest subject, would they rather do it first or last?
 - Include breaks, free time, exercise and time outdoors
 - Review their teacher's expectations
 - Include visual reminders of:
 - "Must Do's" – learning tasks, chores, check lists
 - "May Do's" – learning and free time choices
 - Post it where they can see it
- Be flexible; modify the plan/your approach as you go
- Allow ample time for play

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Remote Learning for Elementary School Students *cont.*

- Help them focus
 - Keep them in close proximity (as your work allows)
 - Encourage self-regulation
 - Play pretend
 - Schedule projects with check-ins
- Encourage self-direction
- Follow the child's interests
- Display work
- Give detailed praise
- Avoid negative talk

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Remote Learning for Middle School Students

- Engage your young teen/pre-teen in developing a routine
- Make sure they're logging in to their on-line classes and completing their assigned work
- Ensure that there's a good reason for any incomplete work and that it has a time-bound, actionable next-step
- Have them manage password and log in information
- Help your child learn email etiquette related to their school activities
 - Check for school-related email messages daily
 - Reply promptly to time-sensitive emails
 - Communicate directly with their teachers
- Help them continue to nurture friendships
- Try to find ways to engage them in activities based upon their interests

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Remote Learning for High School Students

- Expect that they have and maintain a routine
- Allow room to demonstrate self-sufficiency
- Prioritize their mental health needs
- Support them to stay connected to friends
- Support their scope of interests
- Use this time to explore potential future careers
- Reinforce optimism about their future
- Ask them what they appreciate or are grateful for

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Remote Learning for Kids with Special Needs

Contact your child's IEP support team to discuss strategies and tools that can be put into place to meet specific needs

How can they:

- Provide support remotely
 - Deliver speech/occupational/physical therapy virtually?
 - What additional therapy exercises can they recommend?
 - How can you integrate various therapy activities while playing a game with your child?
 - What recommendations do they have for virtual learning and to help remove learning barriers?
- Inquire about technology that you might leverage
- Make modifications to your existing IEP plan, as indicated

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Children's Anxiety & When to Seek Help

- Most children will manage well with the support of parents and other family members
- Some children, however, may have risk factors for severe anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors
 - Risk factors can include a pre-existing mental health problem, prior traumatic experiences or abuse, family instability, or loss of a loved one
- Contact a professional if children exhibit significant changes in behavior or if these symptoms last for more than 2 weeks:
 - Preschoolers—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinginess, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal
 - Elementary school children—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, oppositional behaviors, poor concentration, and withdrawal
 - Adolescents—sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, and poor concentration

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Balancing Parenting, Remote Learning and Working from Home

Make sure you are communicating with your employer on your specific work-life balance issues and needs:

- Managing your own remote working challenges
- Updating your manager on any significant changes or challenges to balancing working from home and parenting
- Informing your workplace (managers and colleagues) of additional required school meetings and appointments that may periodically disrupt your work schedule
- Acknowledging that your work circumstances have changed dramatically, and you are developing greater agility and flexibility than you might realize
- *What else?*

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Your Self-Care is Essential

Take good care of yourself

- Exercise
- Eat a nutritious diet
- Engage in hobbies/activities that you enjoy
- Stay connected to friends, family, colleagues and other parents
- Get adequate sleep
- Create space/time for yourself
- Use healthy stress management strategies
- Look for humor

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Who Signed Me Up for This Anyway?

Remember...

- **Be a good friend to yourself.**
 - If you're beating yourself up, ask: What would a good friend say to you?
- **Get help when you need it.**
 - You won't always know how to help your kid and that is OK.
 - Think about who could help fill in the gaps -- look to family, friends, teachers, and others.
- **Give yourself credit.**
 - As tempting as it is to just give up, take a moment at the end of each day to breathe and give yourself credit for what went right.

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Give Yourself Credit

“Please know that you are doing a great job in an impossible situation. Being a parent and a teacher and, in most cases, doing your regular job as well is absolutely unreal. We see you, and we appreciate you, like whoa.”

— Mark Joseph, sixth grade math teacher, Newark, New Jersey

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Resources (1 of 3)

Articles on Learning Pods

- www.washingtonpost.com/education/fall-remote-private-teacher-pods/2020/07/17/9956ff28-c77f-11ea-8ffe-372be8d82298_story.html
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/22/parenting/school-pods-coronavirus.html>
- www.cnbc.com/2020/08/10/parents-turn-to-learning-pods-this-fall-amid-covid-what-it-can-cost.html

25 Ideas for Homeschool Organization in a Small Space

- www.proverbialhomemaker.com/homeschool-organization-in-a-small-space.html

Sample Daily Schedules (pre-school through high school)

- Google - keeplearning.khanacademy.org/daily-schedule

Tools to Help Kids Stay Focused During Distance Learning

- www.common SenseMedia.org/blog/tools-to-help-kids-stay-focused-during-distance-learning

Meditation Practices and Exercises for Children

- www.headspace.com/meditation/kids
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxbdX-5eOOo

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Resources (2 of 3) *Learning and Activities*

Elementary School Students

- Scavenger hunts: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/14-Scavenger%20Hunts.pdf
- Coding and making resources: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/12%20Elementary%20Coding.pdf
- Low cost cooperative activities: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/10%20Low-cost%20cooperative%20activities%20for%20families.pdf

Middle School Students

- Chill time: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/25%20Chill%20Time%20Activities.pdf
- Family time activities: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/17%20Family%20Activities.pdf
- Art and activities: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/15%20Middle%20School%20Art.pdf

High School Students

- Creative communication ideas to stay connected www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/1%20Ten%20Video%20Apps.pdf

For all grades:

- www.common SenseMedia.org/resources-for-families-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic

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Resources (3 of 3)

- Internal Resources
 - Immediate Supervisor/Manager
 - Human Resources
- External Resources
 - EAP
 - Family issues
 - Stress management
 - Parenting issues
 - Other
 - Work-Life (available through the EAP)
 - Childcare
 - Elder care
 - Financial
 - Legal
 - Other

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Handout A: Do the Best You Can with Remote Learning

1. Have a designated place for your child to do their work.

- It does not need to be an entire room or behind doors that shut. Just reserve an area specifically devoted to doing schoolwork that is conducive to learning.
- Some do best in a space with others and with more supervision. While others do better in low traffic areas with fewer distractions. You know what works best for your child to be productive. If something does not work well, try changing it up. If it is hard to avoid noise, try adding white noise or music.
- To create a feeling of belonging, you might have kids pin up artwork or otherwise personalize their learning space.
- Help them feel more autonomous by keeping the materials they will need — not just pencils but also pencil sharpeners, for example — close at hand.
- Even having their own backpack, which has their pens, paper, and school supplies that they unpack at the beginning of the school day and pack at the end of the day, can help in creating a space for learning.

2. Rely on a routine and adhere to the school schedule.

- Just as your child would follow a schedule and a routine at school, they should follow a school schedule from home. Incorporate their ‘school schedule’ into their schedule for the day.

3. Partner with your child’s teacher(s).

Try to begin this academic year by opening a dialogue with your kids' teachers. Staying in regular contact with them is more important than ever.

- Partner with teachers for strategies and techniques to help with your child’s learning.
 - Do not hesitate to communicate with your school’s teachers and staff about questions and concerns that you have, as they pertain to your child’s needs. Teachers and counselors cannot help if they do not know what is going on.
 - For instance, if you are having difficulty helping your child to get on Zoom according to your child’s schedule, let the teacher know.
 - Same goes if you know that your child is not paying attention during Zoom class, or if they are having difficulty with a task on deadline and you cannot work with the child until the weekend. Teachers can help with more than we think. And they are usually willing to assist.
 - Understanding what your child has trouble with (and your child’s strengths and interests) helps the teacher build an approach to learning that works for your child. It also helps the teacher predict what might be hard and figure out what kind of support would help.

- Remote learning can pose certain challenges for kids with ADHD and ADD (or other learning differences), so supplemental accommodations may be needed, or accommodations may need to be modified.
- Be on your teacher’s side
 - Teachers are struggling to do their job in the remote learning environment, and they need our understanding and encouragement. According to author Maressa Brown in an article published on Care.com, approximately 40% of all teachers in the United States are currently considering either resigning or retiring. Having your mental and emotional support — not only face to face and via email but also on social media — is essential to their ability to ‘hang in there’ and teach your children.
 - Remember. You and your child’s teachers share a common goal: providing the best learning experience for your child. Educators hope that parents will approach the school year with open-mindedness, and patience.
- Use school resources
 - Contact your child’s school, as well as the local school district and state education resources for support. This is especially critical if your child has an IEP or 504 plan and requires additional support and services at school.

4. Encourage self-direction.

- No one expects parents to be full-time teachers or to be educational and content matter experts. Provide support and encouragement *and* expect your children to do their part. Struggling is allowed and encouraged! Do not help too much. Becoming independent takes lots of practice for your child. And for you, too! It can be challenging to keep from jumping in and “fixing” the situation or assignment for your child.
- Wherever possible put them in charge of their own learning. The more they own their learning—and ideally have voice and choice in their work—the easier and more fulfilling everything will be for everyone.

5. Have regular check-ins with your child.

- Earlier, we suggested talking to your kids at mealtimes, to discuss the plan for the day, as well as goals. Regular check-ins are also important so that you can stay on top of how things are going and ensure that they are completing their assignments.
- Naturally, the frequency with which you are engaged with your child will depend upon their age, their need for help and their willingness to engage.
- Ask how things are going. If they want to show you work, they are doing, great. These brief grounding conversations matter. Not all students thrive in distance learning, some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure.

- Checking in with students can help them to process instructions they received from their teachers, organize themselves, and set priorities. It can help students develop self-management and executive functioning that are essential skills for life.
- Depending upon the child, you might devote time in the afternoon to have your child show their work and explain what they have learned.
- Check the online grade books for your older children. Follow-up with them if there are missed assignments or grades appear to be lower than expected.

Learn to identify barriers

- If your child is having some challenges, try to pinpoint the reasons: Is it focus? Motivation? Too much or too little structure? Do they need a hug or finger-wagging or for you to sit with them?
- And if it is a knowledge deficit, exactly what do they not understand? When students say, ‘I don’t get it,’ the first step is to identify exactly what ‘it’ is—and this is not always easy. Most students do not know what they do not know. That is why you (and an internet full of resources) are there to help them, as are their teachers.

6. Set up and rely on systems to stay organized.

- It is important to explore and experiment with different ways that work for both you and your child to be organized. Engage your child in brainstorming about trying different systems.
- For one 5th grader, watching a clock to know when it is time to log in to a zoom meeting works great. For another, an alarm may be needed, perhaps through a smart phone or speaker.
- For some children, a basic visual checklist of tasks will help keep them focused. It allows them to see the full scope of what they must accomplish and what steps to take.
- If they are logging in to different software programs, where and how are passwords being stored?
- Do you have a way to log and track school activities and homework? Some families keep a planner or enter everything into a shared Google calendar.

7. Prioritize mental health.

- Children are more important than their school assignments. And coming down too hard on your child can damage your relationship. This can be difficult to remember when there is so much pressure (on everyone) to perform and excel. Strive to find a balance.
- We also must remember that many children are feeling unsettled. Their normal life and routines have been uprooted, and they do not have a long lifetime of experience for understanding how to navigate things. They are trying to find their way. If your child is having difficulty, reach out to the teachers and to the school’s counselor. More allowances are being made to support student’s mental health during the pandemic.

- Prioritize your child’s social and emotional needs above academics. If they become overly anxious or depressed, they will not be able to navigate academics successfully, or anything for that matter.
 - You know your children the best. What do they need the most? Social connection with their peers? Exercise and/or certain types of activities? Connection with you? Their routine? Do your best to ensure that they get it.
 - If social connection is something they have been begging for and you have not allowed it for fear of them getting ill, maybe it is time to talk to their friend’s parent and arrange outdoor playdates.
 - Some families have created cohorts of children to play together with the agreement amongst parents to keep their social circles very small to reduce the risk of contracting COVID.

8. Remain flexible - adapt to your child’s unique needs.

- Every kid is unique, and it is important to find out what approach to school and learning works best for your child.
- With time, you will figure out the optimal length of learning sessions, the times that they are most engaged, and what helps them maintain focus.
- Give children a break if they are frustrated, anxious or very distracted.
- Try working with your children on more challenging tasks during the times of the day when they are most alert and engaged.
- Encourage your child to continue working on the things that come more easily when you are not readily available.
- It is OK to slow the pace, giving your child more time to think and process a challenging topic.
- Where possible, allow for flexibility in the schedule. Like many other parents, you may need to adjust your schedule as you go.

9. Connect with other parents.

- It can be invaluable to feel connected and to remember that you are not alone. You are part of a large percentage of the population; parents who are dealing with similar challenges right now and trying to figure things out, day to day.
- Ask other parents how they are dealing with certain things. Share how you are handling them.
- It is important not to feel isolated and alone and who knows, you might just get some great tips or insight that could make a positive difference.

10. Use movement and humor.

- Sometimes we just need to move our bodies. Physical activity can lift our spirits and get our minds refreshed for learning. Try a lunchtime block walk or a 5-minute dance party to help everyone reset and bring new energy to the day.
- Finding the funny right now is helpful on every front, including learning and well-being. Be silly, make wacky connections, come up with crazy answers so your kids correct you - - whatever works!

Some content adapted from:

- www.teachthought.com/technology/remote-learning-tips-for-parents/
- www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a33608758/virtual-learning-tips-for-parents/
- <https://wtop.com/education/2020/07/tips-for-parents-whose-kids-are-going-to-be-learning-virtually/>
- www.care.com/c/stories/16907/how-to-help-teachers-pandemic/
- www.teachervision.com/blog/morning-announcements/a-teacher-shares-the-5-steps-that-homeschooling-parents-need-to-take
- www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/working-with-childs-teacher/why-its-important-to-partner-with-your-childs-teacher?_ul=1*kztqck*domain_userid*YW1wLS11bW9iRWVJbmpid19mb0RlbDFBRnc
- www.healthline.com/health/parenting/working-from-home-and-parenting#Be-okay-with-changing-up-your-routine-but-keep-the-good-parts

Handout B: Create Daily and Weekly Family Rituals and Activities

Create daily and weekly family-based rituals and activities that your kids can look forward to each week.

Research finds that creating everyday rituals, such as 45 minutes of family physical activity after lunch or regularly taking time out to engage in a hobby, can help buffer against life's daily stressors and make us more productive.

If you are self-isolating, it is essential to schedule physical activity most, if not all days — for everyone. Get outside for a walk or bike ride, or plan to do indoor physical activities like yoga, dance games and interactive video games. Make it fun. The important thing is to schedule activities at a time where everyone can agree that they will participate.

If you schedule activities in advance, then everyone can anticipate the activity ahead of time. It can be fun for kids to anticipate a weekly event. For instance, Saturday afternoon bike rides. Sunday night baking contests. Friday movie nights. They can serve as spotlight memories for your child when they recall this difficult time period.

As much as possible, schedule types of activities based on how much energy you anticipate having, otherwise, it might not be the positive experience you are trying to create. Some examples of activities include:

- pizza making night
- baking contest
- dinner theme night (celebrating different ethnic foods)
- Costume night (everyone dresses up in a fun costume and eat dinner in the costume or take a family photo)
- Cooking together
- Board game night
- Bike ride/hike
- Dance parties
- Friday and Monday night movie nights w/sleeping bags
- Video game time
- Reading time

Learn which activities spark your children's interest (Kicking the ball around? Walking the dog?) and make time for them.

If you're struggling with time and energy for these kinds of things, keep in mind that the quality of your time with your kids is more important than quantity. Even 10-20 minutes of quality time together with your child/teen on a regular basis can be meaningful for them, and help them feel supported, understood and calmer. You may find that these times with your children help you feel more connected and supported, too.

For children between 2 and 10 years of age, this can be in the form of ‘child-directed play’ or ‘freely chosen play’. As the name suggests, in child directed play, the approach is not one of giving instructions or telling the child what to do or engaging in competitive play, but rather of letting the child direct and guide the play. This type of play helps cement the bond with your child, and helps children gain confidence and self-esteem.

For older children, you may engage together in an activity of your child’s choice, such as age appropriate boardgames or hobbies, (without controlling, directing, or criticizing). If you have a teen, consider engaging in an activity or conversation of your teen’s choice with a goal to actively listen and support them.

Some content adapted from:

- <https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/pandemic-parenting-guide-how-improve-your>
- www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/04/27/life-lockdown-is-testing-parents-bandwidth-heres-how-protect-your-mental-energy/

Handout C: Remote Learning Tips

Remote Learning for Elementary School Students

- **Define a daily schedule and review expectations**
 - When planning the day, try to include your child’s input
 - For instance, if math is their hardest subject, would they rather do it first or last?
 - Include breaks, free time, exercise, and time outdoors
 - There are many samples of children’s daily plans online to choose from (just google “children’s daily plan”), or you can make your own.
 - Review their teacher’s expectations
 - Post the schedule where they can see it
 - Include *visual* reminders of:
 - “Must Do’s” – learning tasks, chores, check lists
 - “May Do’s – learning and free time choices
 - Include different activities in the day, that last for 1 - 2 hours (coloring, arts, and crafts, reading time, fun games, and writing stories/letters to family members, etc.).
- **Be flexible; modify the plan and your approach as you gain experience and learn what works best for you and your child**
- **Allow ample time for play**
- **Help them focus**
 - When it is hard for your kid to focus, try to **keep them physically close to you** (as much as your job allows).
 - **Encourage self-regulation.** Talk to kids about the connection between bodies and brains and what happens in their bodies when they feel frustrated, excited, or sad.
 - **Play pretend.** Little kids feeling at loose ends might respond to some role playing. Though older elementary age kids may want nothing to do with playing pretend, they may respond to an honest conversation about taking on more responsibility (like chores, self-regulation, etc.) because they are older and gaining maturity.
 - **Schedule projects/check-ins with your kids.**
- **Encourage self-direction**
 - Make healthy snacks, water, supplies, and sensory break materials available for your child to access safely, without your assistance.
 - Encourage children to check their schedules, and check lists. To set the appropriate timers and alarms and check off tasks as they complete them.

- With your child, create a “Parking Lot” process, to ‘park’ items that they need your help with, when you are not available.
 - Encourage your child to continue working on the things that they can do independently when you are not available.
- **Follow kids' interests**
 - If your child is unmotivated, follow their **interests**.
 - Your kid's teacher can likely help with this, too, but they might need to communicate with you (and maybe your child), to know about the lack of motivation and as well as your child’s interests.
 - Consider how you are presenting a task.
- **Display work**
 - Let kids hang up their drawings, writing, or other projects in your home.
 - Even big kids like when you show pride in their work by bragging about their efforts and showing off their work.
- **Give detailed praise**
 - Instead of saying "good job," try giving specific details about your kid's work.
 - *Also, encourage a growth mindset, which means reminding kids that it is not about being good or bad at something, but working toward getting better at it.*
 - Provide positive feedback.
- **Avoid negative talk in front of kids**
 - “Any negativity that [parents] feel regarding school, in person or virtual learning, teachers, or curriculum should not be discussed or vented in front of the students.

Some content adapted from:

- www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/juggling-childcare-telework-tips.aspx
- www.healthline.com/health/parenting/working-from-home-and-parenting#Be-okay-with-changing-up-your-routine-but-keep-the-good-parts
- www.common sense.org/education/articles/parent-tips-and-tricks-for-distance-learning
- www.care.com/c/stories/16907/how-to-help-teachers-pandemic/
- www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/parenting-during-coronavirus.htm
- www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/juggling-childcare-telework-tips.aspx

Remote Learning for Middle School Students

- **Engage your young teen in developing a routine**
 - Grant them some autonomy in creating their plan for each day. And depending upon how mature they are, make them "in charge" of it.
 - If history indicates that they need prompts to think things through, you might ask:
 - What classes/subject do you have today?
 - Do you have any tests?
 - How will you spend your time?
 - What resources do you need?
 - What can I do to help?
 - In addition to classes and schoolwork, their routine should include free time, exercise, social time, time for chores and for being outdoors.
 - Include scheduled breaks from their digital devices.
 - Enforce a bed and wake up time. They need 8-10 hours of sleep a night.
 - Sometimes tweens and teens seem to have a "bad attitude" that is really masking insecurity, boredom, or anxiety. They are often hoping we will help them through it, even when it seems just the opposite. Try to stay calm, not take things personally, and maintain a sense of humor. It can go a long way.
- **Make sure they are logging in to their on-line classes and completing their work**
 - Ask questions to find out. Don't hover over them unless you know for a fact that they haven't been attending classes or not completing assignments.
- **Ensure that any work that remains incomplete is incomplete for a good reason and has a time-bound, actionable next-step**
 - (e.g., email the teacher asking for clarification on step 3 of the activity so that you can turn it in tomorrow by noon)
- **Teach them how to manage password and log in information**
 - It may take time for you to train them... but can pay off in fewer interruptions and greater independence as time goes on.
- **Help your child to learn email etiquette**
 - Help your child learn to check for email messages daily, to reply, and to communicate with their teachers.
- **Help them continue to nurture friendships**, as they are important for this age group.

- Find creative ways to allow social interactions safely.
- **Try to find ways to engage them in activities based upon their interests**
 - Here are some ideas:

Interest	Possible Activity
Loves chemistry	Learning the basics of chemistry through cooking in the kitchen.
Is a Doodler	Sketch noting your favorite movies or old classics.
Loves to eat	Hosting a virtual family meal where everyone preps and eats together.
Loves to win	Setting up family word or exercise challenges.
Likes YouTube videos	Introducing them to Ted-Ed.
Loves taking pictures	Honing their skills with creative photo editing apps.
Loves to organize	Eliciting their help to rearrange a room in the house.
Cannot get enough of science	Exploring the World Science Festival Video Library.
Loves watching music videos	Choreographing and videotaping a family music video.
Loves making music	Starting a collaboration with friends online.
Loves illustrations	Self-publishing a book on StoryBird using illustrations from real artists.
Is a reader	Building a tiny free library of their favorite books for the neighborhood.
Loves technology	Getting a Microsoft, Adobe, or Google student certification.
Likes to code	Learning computational software such as WolframCloud or Kaggle.

Source: www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/20%20HS%20Interests.pdf

Some content adapted from:

- www.common sense.org/education/articles/parent-tips-and-tricks-for-distance-learning
- www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/20%20HS%20Interests.pdf
- www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/corporate-responsibility/education-guides-to-remote-learning.html (parent’s guide)
- www.care.com/c/stories/16907/how-to-help-teachers-pandemic/

Remote Learning for High School Students

The tips we covered for middle school students **also apply to high school students**, including the importance of having a routine.

- A few additional comments about their **schedule and routine**:
 - Teens may prefer the freedom to choose *what they do when*. If, when given the flexibility to do what is expected of them, they come through, acknowledge the specific behaviors that you are pleased with.
 - Do include the parameters and limits on things that are non-negotiable. For instance:
 - Walk the dog before 10 a.m.
 - Eat lunch before 1 pm (so that they will be hungry for dinner)
 - Unload the dishwasher before 5 p.m.
 - Take hour long breaks from devices/social media, every 2-3 hours (or whatever you think is appropriate)
 - If your teen does not keep their commitments, address it. Ask what happened and why the commitment was not kept, and really listen to their response. Ask them how they can self-correct going forward. If you feel it is needed, let them know what you will do to check in on them and/or help them stay on track.
 - Communicate what the consequences will be if they do not come through, then grant them another opportunity to prove they can. If they do not succeed, implement consequences appropriate to the behavior.
- **Prioritize their mental health**

Do your best to support your teen in taking care of themselves. Again, you know your child best and what may or not be effective, but here are some ideas to try and steer them in the direction of self-care:

- Ask them how they are doing. “Hey how are you doing? How are your friends doing? Their parents? Have you heard anything about your teachers, or other people you know?” If they show a willingness to share a bit, consider yourself lucky!
- Ask teens about their own coping strategies. “I’m curious, how’s your daily routine working for you?” If they say “fine” and yet you are worried that all they do in their spare time is play video games, try to get them engaged in other activities.
- Try to choose activities that involve social contact, even if it is just with you or other family members.
- Ask them about personal habits that could strengthen or weaken their mental health.
 - “Are you sleeping the right amount?” For youth, that should be about 9 hours/night. Too much sleep will make them lethargic; too little and they are more likely to become anxious.
 - “Are you eating the right amount of food? Is what you are eating making you feel good or bad? Is there other food you’d like to eat but are finding it hard to get?” There is much to be said for maintaining a decent diet during a crisis

when possible. While junk food may be fun for a day or two, it may seriously depress mood or make a child more vulnerable to stress. A healthy diet is more likely to trigger better mental health.

- “How about physical activity, are you doing enough to keep active?” Though being home-bound can limit physical activity, at the very least they can take a walk around the block. If there is an outdoor space to visit even better.

- **Support your teen to stay connected to friends**

- We need to talk to our teens about their social connections. There is nothing dangerous about social media if it isn't the only way a teen is communicating. Teens should be encouraged to stay connected with others, in their families, even their neighborhoods.
- We can ask, “Are there people that you should check in on? While getting busy with helping others will not occupy every hour of a teen's day, it may make them feel a little more useful, and a whole lot more in control of a situation which they are otherwise powerless to change.

- Look to **support their scope of interests**, just as we talked about for middle school students

- **Use this time to explore potential future careers and the necessary steps for achieving their goals**

- Leverage your virtual network for mentoring and/or internships. This could be the perfect time to help your teen to make connections and explore their interests.

- **Reinforce optimism about their future.**

- There are things teens can do to remain optimistic about the future, especially if they have just experienced major disruptions in their lives like the canceling of their graduation or simply not being able to spend time with friends. These include keeping up on the news, but not becoming overwhelmed by it, and looking for good things that can keep their spirits high.

- Finally, we can **ask our teens to show gratitude for what they do have** and even notice some of the unexpectedly good things that have come from a pandemic.

Rather than letting teens descend completely into an endless cycle of watching Tiktok videos, videogames, we can invite them to *additionally*, join into conversations that point them in a better direction. If they are going to get through this period of social isolation and uncertainty, they are going to need some help from their parents.

In addition to the resources listed for the previous slide:

- www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/nurturing-resilience/202003/what-teens-need-during-pandemic
- www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/going-beyond-intelligence/202003/is-the-new-normal
- www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/attachments/21%20HS%20Learning.pdf

Remote Learning for Kids with Special Needs

For families of students with differing abilities, remote learning can present additional challenges.

If you have not already, contact your child's support team to discuss what strategies and tools they can put into place to:

- Provide support remotely. *For example:*
 - What occupational therapy exercises can they recommend?
 - How can you integrate speech therapy while playing a game with your child?
 - Would they be willing to deliver therapy virtually?
 - What recommendations do they have for you that can be helpful with virtual learning?
- Help to remove obstacles and learning barriers.

Inquire about technology that can be helpful for kids with special needs.

- For instance, most phones and laptops have built-in technology: read aloud or text-to-speech can help struggling readers, and speech-to-text can help struggling writers.
- If you have challenges accessing and utilizing the technology and tools that are being used, find out how to obtain support.

And... As needed, request modifications to your existing IEP plan.

Resources:

- www.intel.com/content/dam/www/public/us/en/documents/guides/parents-guide-to-remote-learning.pdf
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-for-reading>

Handout D: A COVID-19 Survival Guide for Parents of Tweens and Teens

Be positive. Don't judge. Avoid micro-managing.

Your teenager may be eating too much, not sleeping enough, annoying a sibling, or behaving in other ways that aren't ideal. One of the reasons it's hard to be a teenager is the pervasive sense of being judged. Children are blissfully unaware of the perceptions of others, but teens are painfully, brutally aware, and believe that everyone is looking at them with critical, mocking eyes.

So, intervene only when truly necessary. Avoid nagging and criticism. Trust your teen to figure out the small stuff, even if it means they're suffering consequences you could have warned them about. No matter the provocation, make sure your teen feels your positive gaze.

Listen.

Let your teenager know you're available to listen or to do some problem-solving if they want that. When they want to talk, be fully present (no distractions, no devices), and be fully positive (no criticism, no judgment). Offer no solutions, just patient attention and acceptance. Try to avoid giving advice, but instead to ask the questions that lead them to identify the best possible solutions. Any solution they feel they've invented will be worth a hundred solutions you've given them.

Expect drama.

During the teen years, everything is changing rapidly—your child's body, brain, hormones, and emotions are all on overdrive, even without this virus and the need for physical distancing, and the cancellation of everything they care about. Even the wisest and most thoughtful teenager will have moments when this feels like too much to handle. Let that be okay. Your teen may try to aggravate you, but you need to be the grown-up here. Do your best to stay calm and give them the reassurance they really need, that you will do everything in your power to keep them safe.

Expect power issues and conflict.

The adolescent development research shows it's good if you argue frequently with your teenager, as long as there's also love and good humor in your relationship. In fact, the best long-term outcomes for kids occur in families where there's lots of warmth, as well as plenty of inter-generational discussion. A hot debate is a great way for your teenager to discover what you care about, and why it's worth caring about. As much as possible, respond thoughtfully to the substance of your child's issues with you without reacting to their tone.

Expect resentment.

This is a hard time for everyone, and teens don't have the neurological maturity to keep it in perspective. There will be times when your teenager is angry and frustrated and looking for a target for that. You are it. Even worse, if you are enforcing the guidelines and insisting your child stay home, they are probably furious even at the same time they're relieved you're keeping them safe.

Rethink the household rules.

This is a good time to have a family discussion about what everyone needs in order for home to be a safe and happy place. Give up as much power and control as you can, including loosening the media rules, without undermining your child's physical and mental health. Do insist, though, for your own well-being and that of others in your household, that your teenager take some responsibility for managing their moods, not imposing their grouchiness unduly on the rest of the family. (And obviously, the grouchiness rule applies to parents too.)

Help your child broaden their horizons.

This is a great time to talk with your teenager about their hopes and dreams, and to look for ways to help them explore possibilities they haven't yet considered.

Put it in perspective.

Remind yourself that your child once was a wonderful human being, and is doing their imperfect unconscious best to become that again. When my now-wonderful adult daughter was a teenage nightmare, I found a photo of her as a sweet four-year-old. I taped that photo to the fridge. Remembering who she used to be reminded me of who she really was, and helped me stay strong and loving, which is what she needed most of all.

Get help.

If you're dealing with a seriously troubled teenager (drugs, violence, etc.), the extra stressors of this time may push things over the edge. Follow these suggestions, but also get the professional help you need to provide your teenager with a more solid foundation for moving into adulthood. There are psychological helplines being set up to help troubled kids get through the extra challenges imposed by COVID-19.

Your teenager needs you now more than ever. Do what you can to be kind, patient, and loving, and to model good coping skills. That means taking good care of yourself, being patient with yourself as you think together about the best way through this stressful time for your family.

Source: www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/going-beyond-intelligence/202003/is-the-new-normal