

COVID-19: Keeping Children Occupied at Home

With changes to our usual routines and our everyday life being affected by the developing COVID-19 pandemic; many of us with children at home may be facing new challenges, whether it's juggling work without childcare, home schooling, early years development, or just trying to have some sense of normality and structure at home.

It is important that whilst adapting to these changes, we don't become overwhelmed by taking on new responsibilities. Here are some useful tips for keeping children occupied at home -

Home Schooling –

It might feel daunting if you have now taken on the responsibility of Home Schooling, but there are ways to aid productivity and make it fun for them. If your children are unlikely to spend the day at a desk doing their homework, a useful way of engaging them in their learning is by doing real-time interactive activities which can be found on-line, for example: BBC Teach hosts over 30 recordings of interactive 30 to 40-minute programmes called 'Live Lessons', originally designed for use in the classroom. It can be beneficial not to overload children with a heavy schedule each day, this can make them feel overwhelmed and not enable them to absorb all the information. So try and keep 'School time' at home to small manageable chunks spread out throughout the day with breaks to 're-fuel' and keep them hydrated, just as they would have during a 'normal' school day. It is just as important for children as it is for adults to separate their working space, so where possible try and set up an area in the home that is just designated for School work.

Keep them Active –

It can be worrying to think that children may not be getting the regular exercise they need and are used to, by not having regular P.E. classes or attending their usual sport clubs outside of School time. But, there are a number of ways to keep children active whilst at home; encourage them to take part in on-line video led activities and workouts - Joe Wicks has launched P.E. with Joe via his YouTube channel (The Body Coach) Mon-Fri at 9am. Or for early years development there are a number of sensory classes and videos online to get little ones involved in.

Get them Involved & Learn new things –

Learning doesn't just have to be School books and assignments; you might like to encourage children to get involved with things around the house and put their Home Economics lessons in to practice! This could be a cookery class, sewing, or just getting them involved in daily chores around the house. Now is a good time to learn new things too; whether it's a new recipe, language, arts & crafts, hobbies or exploring the outdoors (where possible) and incorporating this new knowledge into a school project. It's important to make it fun too, so consider things to get the whole family involved; you could visit a virtual museum, look at Zoo or Aquarium live cam's, set up a family quiz or play some board games.

Add Structure –

Generally, children look for and respond well to structure and routine, and when our 'normal' routine may feel out of balance, it can be beneficial to put a structure together for them to visualise and follow throughout the week. It might be useful to put together a weekly timetable or schedule clock – ensuring you add regular 'free play' time to break up their day. Equally, some children (and parents) might feel that a timetable is too 'rigid' during a time of such exceptional circumstances and uncertainty and not respond or cooperate well with it – if this is the case, it is really about doing what is best for you as a family unit, not feeling pressurised to do things a certain way, but to fit in learning, activity and family time where you can.

Working from Home –

With all this said, it can be really challenging to keep children occupied whilst also working from home and trying to keep elements of your own schedule intact. Communication during this time is imperative; if you live in a two-parent household, or if your children's time is shared between both parents, it is important to discuss your workload with each other so that you can establish how your working days can run alongside taking care of your children. During such an unprecedented time; it is also important to be honest with your employer about your circumstances and establish a schedule that will work best for both you and them. There may be flexible working arrangements, or reasonable adjustments that could be made to help you work effectively from home, whilst having children with you.

Useful links and Educational apps -

Audible: Currently Audible are offering 100s of children books for free. Just download the app.

Free Three-Month Language Courses: Rosetta Stone is currently offering school children free access to this popular language courses for 3 months. There are more than 20 languages to choose from including French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Free Maths School: Carol Vorderman's Maths School, is currently free. Access via The Maths Factory website.

Popular Spelling App: The popular spelling app Sir Linkalot is free until 12th June 2020. Sign up and they will send you a free code which gives you the discount.

Other useful websites:

Primary School Resources – <https://www.primaryresources.co.uk>

Recurse Bank up to GCSE – <https://www.teachingideas.co.uk>

Workbooks for Primary Schools – <https://teachitprimary.co.uk>

Teachit also provides workbooks for secondary ages as well, however these are on separate sites for each subject e.g. <https://teachitenglish.co.uk>

Primary School Recourses – <https://classroomsecrets.co.uk>