

Dear parents,

You're about to become fulltime educators of your children. You're probably a bit daunted by that. You might be trying to work from home at the same time. That will be a real challenge—you might need to negotiate with your employer about your working hours to fit the children's learning in or you might need them to get on with their tasks while you do yours. Be realistic about what you can do—you're not superhuman and nobody expects you to be.

You might be inclined to create a minute-by-minute schedule for your children. You might have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done but here's the thing.....

The children are as scared as you are right now. They hear everything that is going on around them and they feel the tension and anxiety in the air. Although the thought of being off school for at least 4 weeks sounds amazing—they are probably picturing a fun time like the summer holidays, not the reality of being at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks you will see an increase in the behaviour issues with your children. Whether its anxiety, anger or protest at not being able to do the things that they normally do—it will happen. You'll see more meltdowns, tantrums and oppositional behaviour in the coming weeks. You will probably have to remind them (repeatedly) that they can't go out and meet their friends. This is normal and to be expected under these circumstances. Use Social Media to help with this. Encourage them to use it to keep in touch with their friends and to see the numerous posts about staying indoors being so important.



Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention. Listen to them, speak kindly (even when it's hard!) and reassure them. Try to keep home routines the same. Bedtimes and wake up times should remain the same as normal. That might mean that you adapt your perfect schedule—build a loose plan; limit technology until work has been done every day and include craft activities as well as household chores. Play outside if you can (keeping a social distance), bake cakes and paint pictures. Play board games and watch films. Do a science experiment together. Start a book and read it together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

This is what your timetable might look like:

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	
7.45am-8am	Wake up & breakfast	
8am-8.15am	Get dressed, tidy bedroom	
8.15-8.45am	Exercise (indoors using YouTube or outdoors observing Social Distancing guidelines)	
8.45-10.30am	Academic time Complete an activity set by your school	NO TECHNOLOGY IF POSSIBLE
10.30-11am	Break time Have a (healthy) snack	Research 'How to stay healthy indoors'
11am-12pm	Creative/sharing time	Lego/ music/ baking/ play a board game together
12-1pm	Lunch	
1-1.30pm	Chore time	Wash the dishes/ stack the dishwasher/ hoover/ help parents
1.30-2pm	Read for pleasure	School reading books/ home reading books/ e-books/ magazines
2-2.20pm	Break time Have a (healthy) snack)	
2.20-3.15pm	Technology time	Use EDUCATIONAL technology to support your learning

Try to limit their anxiety by only watching the news once a day and using a reputable source. Talk about how to reduce their risk of being infected. Remind them about times they've previously been sick and got better.

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single child is in the same boat and they will all be ok. When we are back in the classroom, we will welcome the children and pick up from where we left off. Protect yours and their mental health. How we all act and feel during this national crisis will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during this school closure time.

Stay safe and well. We'll be thinking of you and we're here to help.

[World Health Organisation guidance: helping children cope with stress](#)

[Young Minds: What to do if you're anxious about Coronavirus](#)