

Help!! I'm a Parent, Not a Teacher!!!

As schools all over the country have closed their doors due to the coronavirus pandemic and children are engaging in remote learning for the foreseeable future, this panicked cry can be heard rising up from homes everywhere. Parents suddenly find themselves as the primary encouragers of learning and, when necessary, the actual teacher. Many feel ill-equipped to take on this new role, lamenting, "I didn't go to school for this" and "There's a reason I didn't become a teacher." And let's remember the sentiment that it's hard to teach your own children. I remember many tumultuous homework sessions with my own children that often ended with yelling, tears and slammed doors. And I'm a teacher!!! Unfortunately, I don't have all the answers...I wish I did... but I do have some ideas borne from years as a mother, a grandmother and a teacher that might help navigate this very challenging time we're all experiencing.



This is scary for all of us, especially children.

One thing we know from brain research is that it is difficult to focus and learn when we are scared and our lives are in disarray. One of the most important things you can do for your children is to help them feel safe. They probably have many questions. Answer those questions, in an age appropriate manner, but don't over inform. Sometimes less is more. The CDC has a good resource for parents with guidance about talking to your children about COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>). In the end, they need to know that they will be taken care of, no matter what. That assurance will help them be more available to learn in this unconventional instructional environment.

Create a routine with realistic goals but allow for flexibility.

You can't recreate your child's school day at home. It's just not possible. But you can establish a "school-like" routine for these long days at home together. Routine provides predictability and, therefore, an element of calm for everyone. Even with an established routine, though, it's important to remember that remote learning of any

kind requires self-regulation, a skill that most children have not fully developed. That's where your oversight and support will be essential. This doesn't mean cracking the whip, i.e., requiring your children to sit for long hours working. It means setting realistic goals based on what your child can accomplish and, frankly, based on the needs of your family. Many parents are working from home, sharing devices with their children, and sharing work spaces. You will have to establish a routine that accommodates

everyone's work demands. That might mean creating an unconventional school day where direct instruction, or at least completion of work that might require more parental support, is happening later in the day after mom and/or dad have completed their work day. In those cases, plan school work and activities the children can accomplish independently while parents are working. Things like educational games, crafts, and exploring personal interests are all things children can handle on their own. And don't forget to schedule breaks. Children need time to disengage from their work to regenerate (actually, all of us do). Play matters, especially now. You may even need to allow a little more screen time than usual...it's okay!!! Remember, flexibility is the name of the game!

Ask for help.

If your child is struggling with the assigned work demands; if you have one device to share among three children and everything they are being asked to do is online; if your child simply isn't responding to you - reach out to your child's teacher for advice. Teachers can't know if things aren't working at home if parents don't let them know.

Let's remember that this is new for everyone. It's going to be messy. We need to give ourselves and each other permission to not have all of the answers. My last bit of advice is to pray with your children. Let them experience through your example that despite all of the uncertainty we can be sure that God is always there for us. He WILL see us through!!

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