

How to Stay Sane While Distance Learning with your Children

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Many of California's students have already completed at least four weeks of distance learning assignments. Some students were sent home with workbooks and packets of papers to complete. Others were given computers and online accounts. And still others waited while their schools posted weekly assignments online. I have observed various teachers as they have struggled to learn how to conduct teaching online overnight. The victories are many and the students are thriving. I am fortunate that I am able to tutor students with their parents on reading and writing assignments.

These are best practices when guiding your children in their learning:

Make it fun. If your child is rebelling about

learning, schedule one hour each day for a formalized learning lesson and the rest of learning can be accomplished with playful activities. These may include performing art projects, physical fitness, home repairs, balancing checkbooks, organizing photo pictures, and cooking. Older children can play school with younger children and teach the siblings all that they know.

Don't stress. The most important gift you can give your child is your sanity. Make sure to take care of yourself first and exercise daily, eat well, and sleep regularly.

Keep a schedule. Most parents try to get school work completed each morning after their children get dressed, eat breakfast, and complete their chores. Then afternoons are free for playful and learning activities. When parents work full time, they may schedule the learning hour for their lunch break. Get everyone outside each day regardless of the weather. When families shelter in place for weeks, it is important to get outside, feel the sun, gaze at the blue sky, and feel the rain, sleet, or snow. Take a break from being plugged into electronics. All of us are spending hours on the phone, watching television, and working on computers when sheltering in place. It is important to enjoy the quiet and our families when only physically isolating from others. Keep smiling and laughing. This cannot be overemphasized as this is the best medicine that we can offer ourselves and families each day. At first, we were sending funny online stories and photos to each other. Now we are relishing the daily stories. Today, my daughter sent me a picture of how her four-

year-old daughter trimmed her lovely head of hair with the caption that the scissors are now on lockdown.

Our children will thrive when learning at home. As our kids become more relaxed with using a computer, they will be more comfortable with completing the mandatory online testing. Most students I tutor are very proficient at following assignments when not distracted and not feeling overwhelmed when using the computer.

Treasure the celebrations. Although distance learning assignments and social distancing as families are challenging, we are still being creative with celebrations. We stood several feet away from our grandson and daughter as they opened their birthday presents. Each participant was given a yummy lollipop as part of our celebration. Easter and Passover events are being shared online through Zoom. Churches are capturing their sermons through video presentations and CDs.

Keep the faith as this too shall pass. Although it may feel like a lifetime before things return to normal, we will all achieve a new normal. We will still need each other and give back to others. We will still enjoy our freedoms, work hard, and play harder. And we will all cherish the love of family members and friends.

There will be a new normal. As we process and adapt to the many changes in our lives, we are teaching our children how to become adaptable, resilient, and capable of learning and changing careers as new needs emerge and our lives evolve. When talking with friends, I am excited about the many new teaching

skills I am learning when working with students and their families. Students are excited to work with me alongside a parent. And I am excited to focus on trying many new learning strategies when having the time to have the children process their learning style and successes.

Happy home learning!

Mary Ann

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