



Keeping it together during Coronavirus lockdown – our hints & tips to parents/carers

DON'T WORRY! WE AREN'T EXPECTING YOU TO TAKE ALL OF THESE POINTERS ON BOARD AND BECOME SUPER-NANNY JO FROST OVERNIGHT. WE JUST THOUGHT YOU MAY APPRECIATE SOME LIGHT HEARTED GUIDANCE DURING THIS UNUSUAL TIME. WE HAVE PULLED TOGETHER SOME PERSONAL LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES ALSO, OF COURSE, TAKEN A SEARCH ON THE EVER TRUSTY GOOGLE IN ATTEMPT TO KEEP YOU SMILING. IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER HELPFUL IDEAS OR COMMENTS THEN PLEASE DO FEEL FREE TO PASS THEM ON TO FAMILY FIRST AND WE CAN KEEP ON SHARING.



Keep a sense of routine at home

It may be super tempting to stay under the duvet past your usual alarm and pull some all-nighter stretches but do try to avoid this. Even just allowing yourself 30-60 minutes lay in time, still try to get up and continue some of your typical routine such as washing and dressing (we wouldn't judge you if this meant changing into clean PJs!). Allowing the children to dress themselves may also be interesting – let's see who the fashion icons of the future are... and don't forget, the iron can also stay in the cupboard if you really don't fancy an extra chore. This is practically a given anyway.

Get the children involved in making suggestions for your household timetables i.e. morning/afternoon activities, taking turns with chores and making them fun (implement rewards for who does the most dishes or who can put the washing away in the right places).

Some schools have sent home work packs or encouraging children to access resources online which are extra handy but don't let it turn into school. I bet your children wouldn't say no to trading roles and becoming a teacher for the hour! So don't be afraid to sit cross legged on the rug and hand over the chalkboard. Just remind them, school is out by 4pm... then you're the boss again.



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

<https://uk.ixl.com/>

<https://new.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

<https://www.bigeyedowl.co.uk/>

<http://www.fireoflondon.org.uk/>

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/>

<https://www.getbodysmart.com/>

<http://bpes.bp.com/>

<http://lovebiology.co.uk/gcse.php>

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun/>





But also give yourself a break

Whilst we might start forgetting what day it is and feeling like all the weeks begin to roll into one, it's a good idea to still practice having a 'weekend'. It may not be a typical weekend that we are used to but it's a change. Routine is great and we insist on it being the most effective of all the tips here but do also relax a little too. The children will also thank you for the consistency whilst the world can appear so uncertain at the moment.

Use the weekend to switch up whose turn it may be for the following week to suggest your family timetable. Take a Friday night as celebration night and present makeshift awards to one another for your achievements this week. Total up your well-earned star points and dish out the (sensible) rewards.

If you have a partner or adult child at home, take shifts on who has a lay in and starfish for a while or whose turn it is to have a long soak in the bath. We are all taking a lot of time to look after our close ones but don't ever forget, you must always be number 1.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/>

<https://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/blissing-out-10-relaxation-techniques-reduce-stress-spot#1>

<https://www.mindful.org/take-a-mindful-moment-5-simple-practices-for-daily-life/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/click-here-happiness/201812/self-care-12-ways-take-better-care-yourself>



Get arty farty

Who is yet to make a rainbow? Pens, pencils, crayons, paints, coloured paper, magazine cut outs, chalk, the back of cereal boxes, old rolls of wallpaper, anything goes... you don't need to be fancy but remember to display them in your windows and share the love. Messages of hope and thanks are also uplifting to see. Adults don't be afraid to showcase your talents too and don't worry, this one doesn't have to include stickmen.

Junk modelling is pretty cool too. Keep hold of your recyclable waste and let's see who makes the most impressive creation. Simple!

<https://www.popsugar.co.uk/parenting/kids-put-drawings-up-in-windows-during-coronavirus-outbreak-47324740>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/makes>

<http://www.fablevision.com/place/museum/tracingace.html>

<https://www.crayola.com/featured/free-coloring-pages/>

<https://www.happinessishomemade.net/quick-easy-kids-crafts-anyone-can-make/>

<https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/craft-ideas-for-kids/>





Create your own zones within the home

As much as we know you love one another we also understand that there will be times you'd like to sink into a secret hole beneath you and take some precious peaceful moments. Parents - you are not alone in this, we promise. If possible try to allow a part of the house for each person to have their own time: a whole room is wonderful as long as they do not spend all of their time in the room alone, but you can also section several parts of a room up by using cushions or moving the furniture, even facing the wall and using a blanket to surround you can be effective. Do things like put a set of headphones on a beanbag for the 'chill out zone' or create a 'gaming zone'. This is also a great opportunity for den building and exploring your children's fascinating imaginations. Who has the best space ship? Does your pirate ship have a handy hideout and the best skull flag of them all?

How's about a circus tent?

Reading zones can be a lovely way to encourage some off-screen time too; ask your child to ready you a story and take it in turns chapter by chapter?

For anybody able to work at home or is studying too this is crucially important. Set up a desk space where possible and ensure that at the end of your working day, you're able to shut the door to that room and 'go home from work' into another room or part of the house.

<https://www.worldofdavidwalliams.com/>

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-for-parents/things-to-do-with-your-child/den-building/>

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/2016/4/27/how-to-create-a-calm-down-spot>

Try not to isolate, in isolation! (Unless you are poorly of course).

Staying connected with others but also yourselves

Encourage both lone time and some opportunities for good company i.e. involve yourself in your child's gaming and be curious... can they teach you something? Can you bring yourself to let them win? Swear boxes may need to be implemented here and remember, bite your tongue and count to 3... or even better, choose alternatives such as 'FUDGE!'. Laughter is infectious.

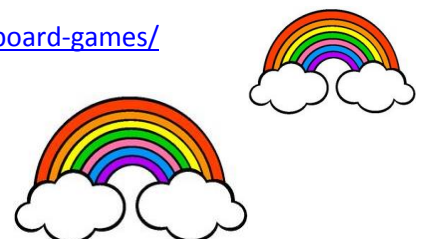
Good old board games are just as effective too and you can even makeshift a pack of cards.

COVID-19 lockdown is not just a scary time for us grown-ups, children can also be anxious without consciously realising and remember that there is no better comfort than simply the presence of your safe people. "We are all in this together". Cue High School Musical.

If you have the means to, stay in touch with friends and family outside of your home (at least by voice) making regular calls and video calls can also be fun – share what you have been up to that day and switch suggestions about what to do next. Grandparents are also great teachers with story time... and if this is a flop, well it can always become ideal nap time!

Do you ever reflect upon your day and 'check out' with yourself? Just recording a brief summary can help you rest that wary head before you hit the land of nod... let go of any worries, park them up onto paper and finish off with listing 3 things you have been grateful for. Positivity is power.

<https://www.moneycrashers.com/family-game-night-ideas-board-games/>





Get creative in the kitchen and with shopping

Come up with meal ideas together as a family that maximises the ingredients you can access and create a weekly on-budget menu. You never know, the next Jamie Oliver could be lurking between you somewhere! Turkey twizzlers? BORING! YUCK! What's your dish of the day? There will also be much more you can do with a Foodbank parcel than you realise.

Asking the children to help with the shopping list also helps you plan if this is do-able and asking somebody to keep check on the calculator to add up prices is a great sneaky way to bring in the mathematics lesson. Additionally for parents who have health needs this can also be helpful to those family members/friends/neighbours who are supporting you with shopping runs; tell them exactly what you want and how many of them you'd like. They will thank you.

<https://brent.foodbank.org.uk/category/budget-recipes/>

<https://realfood.tesco.com/recipes/collections/on-a-budget.html>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/10-easy-budget-family-meals>



Make use of your suggested 30-60 minutes allowance to exercise outside

Family walks and adventures can be fun even if you're only taking a journey down the street or into the nearest park. You can play eye spy as you stroll or create a game about how many "red cars" the children can spot/how many butterflies, worms, bees can we see? etc. Could you encourage your neighbours to pop a teddy bear in the window or hide pictures of Easter Eggs amongst their blinds and curtains? A bear hunt or Easter Egg hunt is right on trend for our upcoming spring time celebrations.

Could you also arrange with friends to time your walk so that you go together but keep apart i.e. separate sides of the road? This may be a way of allowing your children some healthy non-technology safe distant contact with their school friends if they also live local.

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part.html>

<https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activity-sheets>



And don't forget inside exercise too!

You may be more familiar with Green Goddess or Mr Motivator rather than the modern icon Joe Wicks but whatever gets you going, keep going... Just a short 10 minute burst of moderate exercise is proven to increase our mental alertness, energy and positive mood. Regular doses of this can increase our self-esteem, reduce stress and anxiety. Endorphins are our friends; welcome them to the party and get your sweat on.

<https://eliteclubs.com/kid-exercise-videos/>

<https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.htm>





Limit your news-watch

Although we recognise that it is important to stay knowledgeable during this very challenging time, we also recommend that you limit your intake! Are you keeping the TV channel on News 24? Have the radio in the background? Are you tuning in for Good Morning Britain, 6pm Granada Reports and then 10pm BBC & ITV too? Just one of these is good enough as long as it's a trusty source.

Also consider muting any news notifications to your smart phones and have a think about how helpful your social media scrolling is. What's on your feed? Are you browsing cutsie pups and fluffy kittens, celeb gossip or falling down rabbit holes blowing your mind with the next conspiracy theory, and rolling your eyes at sweaty Betty's running commentary on how much she isn't coping and how the world is ending... be aware of who and what is good for you.

Learn something new

Ever fancied yourself in a new career that you just don't have the confidence or time for? Well now may be your chance to polish up some skills and give yourself the boost you've been needing. Check out some free training online - YouTube tutorials are a perfect free resource too. Again this doesn't need to be a big deal. Even if you never got round to hanging those interior doors or that wallpaper still hasn't been put up after a year of having those rolls tripping you up on the landing, put yourself out there and give it a shot. Nobody is watching if you get it wrong!

Languages are brilliant too. We all know you can ask where the nearest pub is in Spanish or call your mother in law a naughty name under your breath in French, but why not pally up with the children or your partner and see who can learn the most Italian or German? Start with the alphabet and numbers. Eins, Zwei, Drei... Partire!

<https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/free>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/learn/>



Everybody loves a freebie £££

Anybody with internet access and a love for animation will revel in Disney's new offer for a week free trial of Disney+. Use your TV, smart phone or tablet to sign up, close the curtains, grab your duvet/blankets and get comfy with your choice of snacks for movie night. There is the perfect selection for all and better still – no cost.

Lots of zoos and animal parks are also offering live web cams of the animals for you to watch in the comfort of your couch.

<https://www.disneyplus.com/en-gb/>

<https://www.chesterzoo.org/virtual-zoo/>

<https://www.edinburghzoo.org.uk/webcams/>

<https://animals.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams>





Get stuff done & keep moving

Don't let your bottom go numb for long and your feet lose touch with the floor. For anybody who is mobile and able, get stuck in. Re-organise your wardrobe, clean inside your cupboards, wash those windows, mow the grass and trim the trees, make a 'to-sell' or 'to-donate' pile of your unwanted stuff. There is always something to keep you busy and it's amazing what a sense of achievement can do for you! Now pat yourself on the back and take a bow. You deserve it.

Speak up! It's ok to be scared.

Never suffer alone. We are all riding a rollercoaster in the strangest theme park we've been brought to yet, some coasters faster and scarier than others and some we've ridden time and time again. This shouldn't mean that we can't scream. Most of all we would really like to encourage you to share your worrisome times with a safe person around you and if you struggle to do this, help is always on the other end of the phone instead...

Children should also be encouraged to share their feelings and we can do this in many ways. Getting creative and easing embarrassment will help reassurance that they are not alone with their worries and we may not always have the answers too. Worry monsters are wonderful for the littlest ones or you can make shift a post box, have worry fairies or super heroes, thought trees, use roleplay so the child can speak via a character or use whispers if saying it out loud is also difficult.

Ask your Family First worker for more on-hand help if needed.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/>

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>



Re-connect. Sorry may be the hardest word but it's worth it.

We are not naïve. We know arguments will break out, voices will be raised and feet will be stomped. Just don't let it drag out. Have your sulk and then pick up that bottom lip and use it in the right way!

S O R R Y. You can say it, sing it, whisper it, text it, arrange it in spaghetti letters. Whatever way is your way just make sure it happens. Restorative opportunities should be very much welcomed during these sticky times. For a 'how to step-by-step guide' take a look at some of these suggestions. If a family meeting is needed to shake up some lazy Larry's or solve a mass fall out between siblings who insist on that dreaded phrase "I HATE YOUUUUUU!", why not try the spoon technique? Each of you hold the spoon in turns and say 1 positive thing about somebody else in the family, try to explain how you think they may have felt when you did what you did and take ownership. You've got this.

<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/siblings-at-war-in-your-home-declare-a-ceasefire-now/>

<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/odd-child-and-sibling-fighting/>

<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/6-ways-to-stop-sibling-bickering-and-rivalry/>

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/communicate-better/>

