

Tips for handling time at home and social distancing with your kids

Adjusting to any new situation can be challenging, especially when it involves the uncertainty of a new virus. Here are a few ways you can navigate being at home with family, and tips for practicing social distancing.

Establish a new routine

Routines and schedules can be an important part of self-care for children. While school and regular activities may be affected temporarily, you can establish a new schedule for your child to create a sense of normalcy. Encourage children to stick to a regular sleep schedule and work together on a general timeline of activities for each day. Keep in touch with your child's school for directions or opportunities for virtual learning. Build in time for play or activities that your child enjoys as well.

Make a list of projects or goals

Many times, our to-do lists are overshadowed by overbooked schedules. Try to use this time as an opportunity to revisit those projects and work together as a family to accomplish them. Make a list of goals, whether fun or necessary, and see what you have time to tackle. Maybe it's a list of books your child wants to read, or a project to reorganize your child's bedroom.

For older children and teens, consider taking this time to teach them valuable life skills around the house, such as learning to change the oil in the car, fix the sink or manage a budget. If you are recommending that your teen read a book, start a family book club and read it along with them. Even while at home, the entire family can have a goal of exploring new places. Many museums and national parks are offering virtual tours. Check your local resources to learn about other virtual offerings the community has, such as streaming story times or concerts.

Build in time for physical activity

Exercise is an important part of staying healthy, both physically and mentally. It's recommended that children and teens get at least one hour of physical activity each day. Even when you are spending time around the house, set aside time to get active. Whether that's playing in the yard, taking a daily walk together, or even a family yoga session, there are ways to mix it up.

Connect despite distance

Social distancing does not mean that you cannot check in with family members or friends. Try to call or video chat with loved ones to see how they are doing. Reach out to parents of your child's classmates or friends. You may be able to set up a virtual playdate or chat with friends, depending on your child's age.

Appeal to older children's empathy

Older children and teens may require a different approach, especially if they experience significant boredom or want to disregard social distancing recommendations because they cannot tolerate perceived restrictions on their freedom or a loss of autonomy. Explain how taking precautions through hand washing and social distancing can help protect loved ones, such as grandparents and other at-risk individuals. Your child may be less prone to feel that you are attempting to restrict their freedom and autonomy and more prone to feel that they are contributing to the well-being of friends, family, and society.

Have patience with yourself and each other

Parents should know that as you seek to develop a "new normal," it's okay to acknowledge that the situation is not normal. During a time of many unknowns, it's understandable to feel some stress or anxiety, and this is okay. Model healthy habits for your child by taking time to take care of yourself. Talk to your children and let them know that feeling anxious during these times is normal. Know that your child's schedule does not have to be perfect nor should you feel pressured to be 100% productive every day. The most important thing is that you are there for your child and encourage open communication as you adjust to this change together.

Information Source: Children's Health <https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/6-social-distancing-tips-for-parents>. Stay current on the health and wellness information that makes a difference to you and your family. Sign up for the [Children's Health newsletter](#) and have more expert tips and insights sent directly to your inbox.

For information on the Network Child Care Centers, go to: [Network Child Care Centers](#).

Susan MacLennan 🎵🎵

Employee Program Associate

Governor's Office of Employee Relations

NYS Work-Life Services

Agency Building 2, 11th Floor, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223

(518) 402-3912 | (518) 275-2843 | susan.maclennan@goer.ny.gov

goer.ny.gov/work-life-services