

Tips On Working From Home While Taking Care Of Your Children



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In the whirlwind of recent change, we are all trying to settle into this new reality. This change is often intensified for parents, as they are called to face the additional challenge of working from home with children.

Parents often start by setting up a new working space – that is hopefully child free. They need to introduce new rules that have never been applied before in their home setting, they juggle the demands of work and parent, split between conference calls and home schooling, excel sheets and play time. On the other hand, children can face difficulties as well, missing that daily structure, absorbing the fear coming from media, missing their social interactions with their peers, perceiving different behaviours from mum and dad that can be very confusing; it can be quite hard for a toddler to understand that yes you are at home, but no, you are not as available as you may have been in a pre-Covid-19 situation!

SO, HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO BUILD A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE WITH YOUR FAMILY WHILE WORKING AT HOME:

1. CREATE A NEW ROUTINE

You probably have your Instagram feed full of new daily plans for children trying to re-propose their school schedule, all intended to keep your children super busy. Those of you who have tried to implement these can unfortunately verify that; no these do not work, not for more than 2 days anyway!

Flexibility is the key word: structure does not necessarily mean jamming every minute of the day with specific activities. Focus on simple things that help create a comforting space: Have breakfast as a family, allow the kids to be responsible for their daily hygiene and dressing routine. Lunch times should be a gathering around a table and why not try end your shift by reading them a story. Finally, try have a little walk in nature to take in some fresh

air, those are all very simple things but plenty to give the structure that a child needs.

Don't be too autocratic in your schedule. The best plans will involve your children's input! Take time to explain your needs, as well the time and space you need during the day in order to work. Then switch perspective and listen to the types of activities they would love to do, and how they would love to spread their little chores and homework over the course of the day. You can align their self-study/reading time with your working hours. By the end of this process, the new routine will almost look like a little contract, where both the parties have their own responsibility, which will also make this a very empowering process for your little ones!



2. LABEL TIME AND SPACE

Children often find things easier to understand when they are displayed graphically or with colour. An example of this is to use a big image on the door when it comes time to be quiet, which could be switched for a different image when it is ok for them to sing and make noise.

Sometimes there is no ability to physically designate specific spaces for work and play. Your kitchen table may be your desk and your toilet your new meeting room. In this scenario it is important to design an area where your child can move independently yet supervised. The use of colours (simple graphic labels or mini barriers) can help build boundaries, these will capture their attention and allow both of you to get through your activities with less distraction.



3. HOME SCHOOLING

Home schooling can be a source of stress for parents and lead to a feeling of incompetence, failure and anxiety. Circumstances are exceptional and it is important for parents to keep their expectation realistic: your kids may absorb a new concept at a different speed than you had in mind, or maybe you are not up to date with the latest techniques to do division in math, or maybe your children may just not be in love with your teaching style! This can create a stressful dynamic for you both. Embrace the new reality: allow your kids to learn at their own pace, and you will be amazed at the results!



4. MEDIA YES OR NO?

Do you feel like a bad parent because your kids have spent half the afternoon doing a Disney marathon on the couch breaching the new rule of just 1 hour of tv? Again, think flexibility. Take a deep breath and remember to yourself 'you are doing the best you can do in this moment'.

Rules that may have worked before, might need be revisited due this new reality: media can support children's learning (if content is appropriate!).

Just as you may miss your friends, family and colleagues, your children may miss their little friends too: this time can be a great opportunity to introduce the positive function of technology in order to connect with each other. Reach out to other parents, you may even schedule a playdate with other kids through a video call.

