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| **SCHOOL’S OUT - A PARENTS’ GUIDE FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGE** |

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| While children are staying at home, during the COVID-19, it will be helpful to consider your children’s needs for structure, education, exercise, social contact, appropriate leisure time, and calm, rational explanations about the situation. We will address each of these areas in the information below. These are suggestions based upon rational thinking about child development and children’s reactions to stressful and changing situations. **A Need for Structure:**Consider this time to be similar to long school breaks or summer vacation, but it is not exactly the same. If the time away from the school building has not been specified, the break is not as understandable to children. This factor can lead to tension for both parents and children. In general, people do not do well when they are unsure about the future, even in an area as simple as the schedule.Set a schedule for the weekdays and weekends. Children and teens will do their best if there are plans for each day, especially the weekdays when they would have been in school. To that end, consider these ideas:**Set up a bedtime and wake-up schedule:** * After perhaps the first few days, have your child/teen follow the usual school-day, weekend day sleep schedule. It is best to have a regular wake-up time and bedtime that is the same as the schedule you set when they are attending school. It is very hard to get back on track especially if kids get into a late-to-bed, late-to-rise schedule.

**Establish a school-day educational schedule:** * A free-for-all loose schedule is nice for snow days or other short breaks, but can lead to boredom and a difficult time getting back into the educational routine if it lasts.
* Find out how your children’s schools plan to keep students engaged and active and follow the suggested schedule
* Consider an idea such as this:
	+ Start with a morning meeting and schedule list – It is what your children’s teachers do
	+ Have a list of the subject’s and activities for the day
	+ Spell out 30 to 45 minute blocks to work on the subjects that your child takes
	+ Consider this schedule for elementary school children:
		- Morning Math
		- A walking break or playing catch for about 10 minutes
		- Social studies including current events perhaps using Time for Kids or online resources
		- A set of jumping jacks and a race around the house
		- Science
		- Lunch and lessons
			* Have your children help make lunch and build in lessons using the internet or library books exploring:
				+ Where does the food come from (ex: how is bread made from farm to bakery)?
				+ What transportation is required to get the food to the store and home?
				+ What workers are involved in the supply chain?
				+ What government agencies are responsible to assure food safety?
				+ What science is used to make advances in food quality (ex: consider the early work of Gregor Mendel)?
			* Math and science can be incorporated into cooking and meal prep as well
				+ What happens to vegetables when they are heated
				+ Why do we cook meat? Do cooking help reduce germs?
				+ How much more is 360 degrees than 120?
				+ At what temperature does water boil?
				+ If you have an old thermometer, what is the substance inside made of?
		- Recess
		- Language arts
			* Reading
			* Writing
		- Brief Homework – review one of the activities from the day
		- Set up safe playdates
		- Consider some joint lessons with classmates that are healthy

**Education:** * Many schools are providing virtual instruction and/or assignments
* Make sure your children keep up with the assignments and can engage in any virtual instruction
* If your school is not providing these options, turn to sources from reputable home-school organizations and websites. Many of these organizations provide lessons and materials for every grade level
* Library associations provide guidance on books, both fiction and nonfiction, for different age levels
* As the response to COVID-19 continues, state and the U.S. Department of Education may start providing resources. The National PTA may also do the same. University schools of education may begin to provide materials and lessons as well.
* **Resources from Scholastic are available at this link:**[https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/scholastic-creates-free-open-access-digital-hub-to-help-keep-students-learning-while-schools-are-disrupted-by-coronavirus-301023010.html](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D2a11deb839-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=WEBcup3Tjx0DQoPsLQ-3BJ9_SOTG3LsoGVCzG-ISBZY&e=)

**Exercise:** * Everyone will be more calm and will sleep better by keeping active each day
* Get involved with walks
* Play kid games with your kids such as tag, hide-and-seek, Red Rover, Simon Says with physical actions, relay races, bike rides, and hikes (which can be used to teach about nature, plants, animals, and birds) – math can be used in many of these
* Sports – you can get together a small group of healthy kids to play some games – not always fancy – kickball is enjoyed by all ages

**Social Contact:** * Youth that are connected with other kids are happier, less anxious, and have more fun
* Even when isolated, there are many options for connections with modern and even old technology – encourage appropriate and reasonable use of phones, tablets, and computers for making the connections
	+ Follow wise guidance on use including broad monitoring of content and the tone of communications that have been or are occurring
		- You do not need to know the details of each interaction, but you should have a sense of the themes and the persons that your child is contacting – even teens
		- While out of school, children may be seen as potential targets for cyber creeps, so encourage your children to be open about the messages that they receive and persons that are making contact attempts
* Follow guidelines on the safe size of group contacts that people can have – relying upon the Centers for Disease Control or your local office of public health.
	+ Getting friends together in small groups can provide fun and ease tension
* Verbal, written, and electronic contacts with quarantined people will help them. Some social service organizations may be seeking people who will volunteer to be in touch with those who are quarantined or sick.

**Leisure Time Considerations:** * Let your kids have a varied leisure time diet. Some of the content can be serious and uplifting and a smaller portion of it can be silly or even junky, like dessert and snacks.
* Make certain that a good portion of leisure time activity is active, both mentally and physically.
* Passive observation and watching of content is fine within limits, but don’t let your child’s mind go numb by consuming content that does not require thought. Teachers and school provide kids with over 6 hours of mental exercise. Try to match that.
* Passive and sedentary entertainment can also be a problem. It can lead to a reduction in physical health and fitness and contribute to unwanted weight gain. Remember, at school, children and teen are at least walking around the building.

**Reducing Anxiety in the Face of Real-Life Concerns - Provide  Rational Explanations about COVID-19: and Help Maintain Appropriate Calm** * There are many present and developing sources of information for adults and for adults to provide to children.
* For children of all ages, make certain to provide accurate information from reliable sources.
	+ Recognize that even young kids overhear conversations and news reports.
	+ Children say that they find local news that they do not understand to be more frightening than scary fairy tales or even horror movies. Because of this, make sure to ask them if they have questions or concerns about the situation. Work hard to clarify their understandings.
	+ Of course, protect your children and family members and let the children know how they can protect themselves and others. Guides and rules for social distance and hygiene and consulting with health care professionals should be followed.
	+ Even young children can calmly understand illnesses. Let them know at an appropriate developmental level how COVID-19 can be passed on to others, that most people do not become very sick, and that health professionals will be working hard to take care of the very ill in isolated settings.
	+ Resources for keeping current on how to protect oneself and children are available at the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, state, regional, and local offices of public health and your child’s health care providers who are being informed by their national professional organizations and the government. Links are provided below.
	+ Links for providing information and support to children are below.
* Consult health, mental health, and other sources of counseling such as clergy if you find yourself excessively worried, tense, or sad. Check for these reactions in your children too. Stressful times contribute to mental health problems, especially if they were present before the stress started. Make sure to take care of you and your children’s mental health during this health concern.
* Engage in reasonable distractions and have your children do the same. Consider taking in doses of news rather than checking it constantly. This is an idea that comes from an expert in cognitive therapy, Dr. Robert Leahy.

**Finally, watch out for problematic reactions to stress in you and in your children:** * Times of extended stress are associated with increases in:
* **Substance use** – by adults and teens and, some children
* Be careful and mindful of excessive use by adults and any use by those under 21
* **Sibling fights** – the children may be cooped up with one another for long stretches. Be ready to help discuss conflicts and set guidelines for how to resolve problems.
* **Fights and tension between and among caretakers** – parents will probably have more arguments and conflicts between all of the caretakers are likely including sitters, nannies, grandparents, and other family members. Tight quarters and limited time away from each other can contribute to arguments and even aggression – this is even found in mice.
* **Domestic violence and child abuse** – Tempers and poor decision-making flair up during times of stress. If you are concerned about your actions or the actions of others, please make sure to rely upon regional resources and hotlines. Find ways to decompress and take breaks. This may mean that you will have to work as a team to relieve one another.
* **Demoralization and depression** – the situation can seem bleak as some people will be and have been getting very ill and losing their lives.Try to keep information in perspective. How you do so will depend upon your faith and beliefs. Turn to these sources for support. Also remember that, although sad, most people will survive as they have in past wide-spread health problems.

**Sources of information on COVID-19:** * [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3Dcd04f0d515-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=ZJZ-y0r-l2PzleNnupv_taRlAHZWT6zfY6CfNQr_Mjk&e=)
* [Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Workplace, School and Home Guidance](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D38df0fd7e5-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=po07kkC0d2qAbiK6lCVTrCHpluefutew5RYKL0yty6s&e=)
* [Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Community Mitigation Strategy](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D36c4b22969-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=_Dr9ASe1qR2SxFUchoEaoXxLTjihsl_SwmvDxlHbHJc&e=)
* [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D74d5fc0693-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=zDuAXtgE3HqXu7hTOQXyGYeY8Fm_gzCxGBSCJLVE_vo&e=)

**Talking to Kids about COVID-19:** * Educational Webinar from the Child Study Center at NYU Langone Health: [Everyone is Anxious! Talking with Children about Novel Coronavirus](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D944cb3101e-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=YwZzeurFEZtm1-pt-Qd-iE00vYYQYbEmftw3UofdU1I&e=)
* [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D81a8c135ea-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=DDDE2PiN6digoCtlsYWw1htob8cOzxdU_uXeWf89qdk&e=)
* [National Association of School Psychologists:](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3De8600c8a1d-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=qS091pfhwRZdrQfSh3UJa0RKPdQkV_-6hxxzOotZms4&e=)
* [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3Ddecaadef9a-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=JI2a9Ah2qh6Lq7vzG5eC0iBYspDjYYzXYw3x6YUXiuI&e=)
* [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3Da8621dfc2d-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=jAMUwSjp9PprNMfRJw9lNQvsIHmw3JCzndRBbKwuDzg&e=)
* [National Public Radio: Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D860387d06b-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=QxRXahfVZhm7bz7XTT4TQ0xGoNK9-DnFiPbMfSSJ2yE&e=)
* [Unicef: How teachers can talk to children about coronavirus disease (COVID-19)](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3Da6fc978481-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=8R12Md3jWUkjGymvi6MNGJaNA9YdWv00y0RbiR_ZP9E&e=)
* [New York Times – March 10, 2020: Talking to Teens and Tweens About Coronavirus](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyulangone.us7.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3D42434aa3564c40cbe8948f67b-26id-3D9480bfebfe-26e-3D6314558468&d=DwMFaQ&c=j5oPpO0eBH1iio48DtsedeElZfc04rx3ExJHeIIZuCs&r=sHJIoDwYZekvifJBdIhW3xLkvW1QY5cd_51yQXkcsLA&m=vAcqL8Kf7LMPedwcBjmgKCJHSXWpeWvwAPGrRte_GbY&s=PfAoo_0STugOcRcYeo7uVPvVEycG4CWum_SW9Brw7O8&e=) (subscription required)
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