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Surviving a Quarantine with your Kids

Attribute to: Allison Kranich, LCPC, licensed clinical professional counselor at Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital

What is the best way to set a routine during the weeks that we are home together?

Have a family or house meeting to create a plan. Write down the plan and review it verbally on a regular basis to account for the varying ways people absorb information.

Expectations can be built into the daily schedule. Have designated “chore” time in which kids can complete assigned tasks. Have them complete these tasks prior to engaging in any free play.



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We are spending a lot of time together. Do family meals still matter?

Have a set meal or meals when everyone will eat together as a family, and try and enforce these as much as possible to encourage socialization and good company. Answer any questions children or teens may have about the quarantine or the new coronavirus, but talk about other things to keep the conversation light. Ask questions about their favorite books, movies and their summer plans.

Is this a time to teach kids about meal planning? Should I have them help me develop grocery lists?

Take caution in promising any certain items, in case the stores don't have them. Try and engage kids in activities to make new meals and snacks, though.

What are affordable ways to keep my kids busy?

Don't feel like you have to splurge on activities to have fun. Teach kids important life skills like laundry, car maintenance, organization, sewing and baking.

What are the best ways to work from home when my kids are in the house?

Establish rules about working from home to ensure children understand your expectations.

Have ways for kids to alert you if it is an emergency.

Have designated “quiet time” each day for reading or napping.

How can we avoid arguments during a quarantine?

Create a “parking lot” of issues that you agree to discuss when the quarantine is over. Forced time together can be stressful, and this isn’t the time to address issues that cause resentment and frustration. Make a list of things you agree can be addressed at a later date, and then be sure you follow up on that commitment when the time is right.

It seems like we’re all just snacking and sitting around right now. How do we avoid unhealthy weight gain while we’re at home?

Encourage healthy eating and cook together to promote feelings of well-being and to boost your immunity.

Make exercise mandatory for every member of the household. Get in some type of movement to reduce stress and maintain or improve your overall health. Whether it’s a family dance party or a private yoga workout, aim for 30 minutes each day and if you can enjoy time outside, even better.

How do we combat anxiety in these uncertain times?

Remember your children or teens will model your own behavior. If you want them to stay calm, you have to stay calm.

Try to refrain from putting on the news or radio. Having the news on will only increase their anxiety levels.

I know my kids are always going to remember this time. How can I make the memories as positive as possible?

Children create memories based on emotions, whether positive or negative. Make this an opportunity for them to look back and think “wow, we handled a tough situation really well.” Children will remember how you as parents responded to this crisis, it’s up to you to create a warm and nurturing environment amidst chaos.