



Devon Family Resource

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Dear families,

As schools look set to close, many of us are either working from home, or juggling work and family life and it seems likely that are close to lockdown. You might be feeling worried about how to keep yourself, and your children, safe, occupied and happy during these tense times.

This toolkit is designed to offer you some advice, activities and resources to keep you going and contains options for entertainment, moments of parenting crisis and general advice about supporting your family's wellbeing. If you are already struggling with your children's behaviour, you may be even more concerned about isolating, so there are lots of resources in the kit around working with parenting challenges too.

Here are my tips for making the most of the time you have with your family, and ensuring that you keep the peace as much as you are able:

1. Try and stick to routines as much as you are able, especially if you have a child with special needs or challenging behaviours. Routines and consistency, can be very reassuring, both for children and parents and provide a focus during times of crisis. Consider co-creating a schedule of activities with your children that you can all refer to, as if they were at school, or an activity day– this, hopefully, will also allow you to schedule in some quiet time for yourself.
2. Consider scheduling in time for learning, physical activity and creativity – some activities can be all three! Make time to play games as a whole family. Involve your children where possible in activities designed to keep your household running and make it a fun game – can they measure ingredients when you are cooking or collect laundry of a certain colour? Help them to help you. Using a timer, such as a simple egg timer, or the stopwatch on your phone to time activities can make them more fun. It can also help you to boundary time for yourself when needed – 'I will be there in a minute' can feel endless to some children, but 'I will be there when the alarm rings in exactly 5 minutes' is more manageable.
3. Try to be positive and upbeat within earshot of your children: children listen in to adult conversations a lot, and if they hear your concern, they may become more anxious. Keep your explanations of what is happening simple (see resource around explaining the virus simply in the toolkit) and give them lots of reassurance and warmth when they need it. You don't always need to be solution focused – sometimes to listen to their fears and acknowledge them is enough. Practice saying, 'I can hear that this is frightening, but I am here with you.'



4. Be kind to yourself in these trying times – we can't get everything right as parents, and much as routines are important, you might decide not to sweat the little stuff for now. Your children might push boundaries and you will need to pick your battles. Normal service will resume after the crisis: for now, the most important thing is your safety, wellbeing and peace.

5. Last, but not least, if you feel totally overwhelmed, it is okay to let your children occupy themselves with screen time while you go upstairs for 5 minutes and deep breathe, phone a friend or lie quietly with closed eyes. (see the toolkit for tips around calming yourself)

Be kind to yourself, and to each other and keep an eye on our website and social media for regular updates and useful information about parenting during the crisis.

<https://familyresource.eci.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ExeterCommunityInitiatives>

<https://twitter.com/ExeterCI>

With very best wishes,

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