



## **How Can Parents Navigate Multiple Roles During COVID-19 School Closures?**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a pervasive impact on the population both nationally and across the World. Temporary closing of businesses and schools and social distancing rules have left parents and their kids largely confined to the home. Promoting adjustment to the notable alterations in daily life has become paramount. Parents are one group that has been feeling the strain associated with these changes. Although parents are accustomed to multiple roles and balancing, they likely now find themselves in the position of simultaneously managing jobs, childcare, homeschooling, maintaining their home, and more. Below are some tips and strategies that aim to facilitate adjusting to the new day-to-day.

For school-aged children, homeschooling might be a new role for you. You, your teacher, and the district are in this as a team. Understand that difficulties with online or other new methods of instruction are normal. It is also understandable that it might be difficult to keep your child motivated to complete tasks. Seek help and ask questions when you need it; teachers are probably expecting questions (this is likely a new endeavor for them as well). After schoolwork or during breaks, plan for downtime for both you and your child.

Parents of young children might also find this time particularly challenging. Young children tend to be less independent, demanding more attention from parents. Devise a flexible strategy/plan that attempts to devote some time to interacting with children, independent playtime for children, work and household duties, and quality alone time for parents. Approach the day with a plan to intersperse parent-child interaction with independent child play. Provide children with ideas of what to do during the independent play time. Additionally, engage children in tasks of daily living that are developmentally appropriate (e.g., picking up toys and dirty cloths, folding/putting clean clothes away, dressing self). Whenever able, limit screen time (e.g., TV, iPad, smart phone) as this can consume time that could be spent interacting with the environment and engaging in physical activity.

Working parents will also find themselves simultaneously managing children and trying to work. If your work is flexible, try to find a time that works best to get things done. If you have a partner or other adult in the house, work together to coordinate schedules so everyone in the home who is continuing to work is able to do so.

Just prior to bed or when waking in the morning, make a list of things that you would like to do for the day and prioritize the items on the list. Approach each day with flexibility and realistic expectations that you may do more or less in each area. Decide what works best for your family and try not to compare with others. If obligations require a strict schedule, or if a schedule works best with your child, make a

schedule. If a schedule is overwhelming and/or you need flexibility, don't feel obligated to make one. Decide what works best for your family and be okay with modifying as you learn and grow through this situation together.

As you manage your roles, strive to engage healthy coping strategies and self-care, which means attending to both your physical and emotional needs. It is okay for parents to have "down time." It might serve a parent well to find some way of relaxing after their child is in bed. Consider the laundry for the next day and engage in some television or reading if you need a break. Self-care also means engaging in physical activity (e.g., take a walk or time outside if able, and you can find numerous workouts online, some brief, that require little space and minimal or no equipment).

Parents have the tendency to focus on caring for others, often overlooking their own needs. Attending to your own well-being will have a positive impact on the family functioning overall.

Remember that you can also talk to someone who can help. If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our [Psychologist Locator](#). Be aware that services are available online so that you can get support you need in a private, online setting without leaving your home. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers extensive tips and resources for parents at <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAP-Offers-Parent-Tips-and-Resources-for-Dealing-With-Covid-19-and-Its-Stresses.aspx>