

How can I manage being stuck inside with my family?

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With recent news regarding the Coronavirus pandemic, many parents might be concerned about how to manage or to think about increased time together as a family.

First, we all do well to pay attention to science-based medical advice and to avoid overdosing of media. Panic interferes with effective preparation and response and taxes everyone's mental health. For helpful information and reasonable tips check out authoritative websites (e.g., [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov), which includes recommendations regarding children). It's probably also wise to begin thinking about childcare options should you need to continue to work and your child's school closes (even if temporarily).

If you do find that you have more time in your home with your family, remember that even if your family is healthy, you are helping to protect others who may be vulnerable, and try to view this as an opportunity to spend quality time together. Life is usually too hectic. Although a school closure might lead to understandable worry (and fear for those with health concerns), you can use the time to answer questions your children may have, to reassure them, and to enjoy shared activities. A family can *choose* to think of more time together at home as an apocalyptic retreat or as a welcomed staycation. If your children are young, consider toys and activities you already have but have not had time to use. Are there things in the house you've always said you want to do when you have more time? If you need to work from home and schools have closed, consider what your children enjoy doing and making these toys, crafts, or activities available to them. What about creating a camp ground in the family room, starting a gaming tournament, watching old family videos, playing indoor baseball with a balloon, starting a cupcake contest, watching funny videos online or one of hundreds of other ideas that an internet search of "staycation" can yield? These are the kinds of days our children, 10-20 years from now, can look back upon with a warm smile and say, "remember that time in 2020 when we..."

You may worry about "cabin fever" but remember that social distancing does not necessarily equate with being inside. There are many kinds of activities that can be done outside without getting close to others (e.g., walks in nature, bike rides, stargazing). It's also okay to create some space and boundaries in your home. You can reflect together, "how can we support each other, give each other space when needed, and enjoy each other?" Monitor that you might get easily annoyed with little things (which makes you human), and try to remind yourself of the "big picture" – that we are the most important people in each other's lives, both in good and tough times, and that getting testy with each other some of the time is inevitable. Finally, strive to engage healthy coping strategies and self-care (especially for individuals who are caring for children, older adults, or other loved ones), including maintaining healthy doses of physical activity (e.g., you can find numerous workouts online that require little space and minimal or no equipment). All crises are a combination of pain and opportunity; by providing empathy for the former and actualization of the latter, we all afford our families the occasion to manifest high road life.