

Coronavirus update: Tips for housebound families

You're working from home until further notice. The same is true for your spouse. Yesterday, you learned that your children's school system is shutting down until public health officials have a better understanding of the coronavirus. And let's not forget about the family dog who takes up a lot of space sprawled in the living room.

This quarantine-like scenario adds a new dimension to "family time". As much as you love your family, all of that togetherness can become taxing after days—or even weeks—of doing it. Below are some tips on how to navigate the uncharted waters of living many of the 24 hours under the same roof so that you and your family members can keep a healthy mental equilibrium.

1. **Set expectations.** Meet with your family to discuss your individual roles on how to make this situation work well for everyone. What is expected of everybody? For example, what does the work and school day look like while at home? When does the work/school day start and end? Can your children engage in social media activity during the "school day"?
2. **Develop and stick to a routine.** Get up and greet the day as you normally would. Dress for the day as usual. Start the work and school days at their normal hours. Take breaks, do your chores and other daily activities as you normally would. Treat the workday as a workday and let weekends be special.
3. **Be physically active.** Physical activity is important for everyone, particularly younger children and teens. When the family is working from home or going to virtual school, it is easy to fall in the habit of staying confined at home and neglecting physical activity. Encourage your children to be outside as much as possible (but not with others). If you don't have access to a yard or the outdoors, keep moving in your home as exercise helps to boost mood. There are many exercises you can do on your own—planks, jumping rope, push-ups etc.—or you can follow



exercise regimens found on the internet. Be sure to set aside time for physical activity.

4. **Set daily goals.** You can get things done at home. In fact, a work-from-home scenario—without the normal commute—opens up time to accomplish those tasks you've long been avoiding, such as organizing your closet or cleaning out the garage.
5. **Don't take things too personally.** If you find your spouse or children are sticking to themselves alone in a room, don't jump to any conclusions. They probably just need time to themselves, which may seem more apparent as you are together much more than you normally are.
6. **Take advantage of the time.** As the adage goes, time is our enemy. Normally, we don't have enough time to do the things we want, such as being with our loved ones. However, as this public emergency moves closer and closer to a quarantine—mandated or self-imposed—you may have more time, and if you handle the situation right, you might actually look back on this time as a period of togetherness and growth. Watch more movies as family; play family games; or learn a new craft or skill together, such as making the perfect soufflé.

These tips are a good place to start for a healthy family dynamic during times such as these. However, if you need further advice or guidance, call your company's employee assistance program, which specializes in addressing work/life and other common challenges.