

We know that many of you are in a position where you will be home with a child who craves the routine of school. Here are some tips we hope will be helpful as you figure out how to configure the days ahead.

1. **Make a daily schedule with room for flexibility.** *Choose ideas that fit your child*

- ❖ If you have a whiteboard and a child who can read, this is a great way to write out a schedule for the day but alter or change pieces as needed.
- ❖ If you have a child who reads with pictures, you can draw some small stick figures. Taking photos is another great way to generate pictures for your schedule.
- ❖ Sit together and make your schedule in the morning after breakfast so your child knows what is happening.
- ❖ For some children who like to mark progress, when that item is complete, remove it from the schedule and see what might be next
- ❖ (Ideas for what to put in that schedule come later in this list).

2. **Help children know that school will come back.** *Choose ideas that fit your child*

- ❖ Find a wall calendar or print one off. Use a special color or sticker to show when school will probably start up. **AGAIN, MAKE SURE YOUR STICKER IS MOVEABLE.** Cross off days as you get closer to the date when school most likely starts back up again.
- ❖ Some children may appreciate having dot stickers with 2 colors representing home days and school days. **GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF MARCH** and put on a sticker for each school day in that color and then the home days in that color. Show when the school color is coming back. This is not something you do each day but something you prepare in advance so the child can see when the school color is **PROBABLY** coming back. Again, dot stickers for returning school days should be moveable as conditions change.

Unexpected Time at Home with Your Child Who Craves A Routine

- ❖ Make a paper chain of the number of days you will probably be home. (This is an easy way to add or subtract if the number changes). Have your paper chain anchored to a picture of school or the word. Then every day at home, rip off one of the chain lengths to show you are getting closer.
- ❖ Some children will be reassured by your words.
 - “When our home days are done, then school will be back”.
 - If your child is older and appreciates having a “police” or “government”, you could say:
 - “There is a person in charge of all schools in Michigan called the governor (feel free to show her picture). She decides when it is safe to be in school. Right now, she says there are too many people who are sick to be in school. She will tell us when it’s safe to go back to school. She is in charge.”
 - You can repeat something like this as needed. Some words can sometimes be helpful. You can also write these words in a small booklet form to be read to your child.

3. Be calm.

*Even if you are not feeling calm, you will want to bring that kind of peace to your child’s life. So, if emotions are running high...

- ❖ Speak at a lower, slower, quieter volume.
- ❖ Practice breathing in through the nose and out the mouth slowly. “Smell the flowers, blow out the candle.”
 - **You could have an actual flower and candle to practice slow breathing in a fun way!**
- ❖ Show your kids how you turn to God in times of need. Pray together.
 - “God, you are in charge. You love us. You are watching us. You protect us. Thank you for being so strong. Please help us to remember that you are WAY bigger than any sickness. Help us feel calm today. In the strong name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

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- ❖ Now that God's got this, focus on something else. Turn off the news. Disconnect from your phone or tablet. Pull out family pictures and photo albums and think about other things!
- ❖ Pull out a hand mirror or go stand in front of one. Practice making different emotion faces in the mirror. "Let's do afraid". "Let's do happy". Let's do..." End with the emotions of sleepy or happy or calm.
- ❖ Another way is to pull out your phone camera and take pictures of your child with different emotion faces. This is a great way to practice different emotional states.

4. Teach instead of react.

- ❖ Remember, this longer home stretch is new for your child. You may need to teach your child and practice this skill.
 - For example, an older child may not be used to "bunk time" in the afternoon. You may need to practice setting a timer and staying in the bed with books until the timer goes off. Start with a 2-minute time and then a 5-minute time. Be with your child and model what he or she can do during this time. Praise your child for success in practice. Then set the timer for the 30 minutes scheduled. This is called teaching the activity. The opposite is just moving right to the 30 minutes and then "reacting" when the child does poorly. "Teaching" is well worth the time investment.
 - Some resources include:
 - Time Timer App - \$2.99
 - Visual Countdown Timer App - Free

5. Stay strong as a parent or caregiver.

- ❖ Time to yourself is probably going to be limited. If you have two adults or older teens in your home, set up a schedule so that you get 30 minutes free and apart from your children. When it's "bunk time", make sure you take that as well.

6. Ideas for your home school day

Here is a sample schedule. Yours will vary based on your child's gifts and needs.

REMEMBER, do things your child **LOVES** to do often in the schedule. Your child's teacher may give you ideas for home. Some children will need those ideas adapted to his or her learning level.

Breakfast

Wash Breakfast Dishes

Remember, these are important skills, but most children would love a sink full of water to wash dishes for a while.

Get Dressed

Morning Bible Story and Prayer

This might be a very special time to highlight some favorite stories or highlight qualities in people in the Bible. You could even make a collage of pictures of people you have highlighted so you can review the people you have studied.

Table Time

Set up a learning station at a table in your home. Have a set of activities and a timer you can set for a certain amount of time appropriate to your child's level. These activities might be reading a book or beginning a journal in a notebook about "My Home Adventure" or taking a photo of your child doing something special, printing it off, and then having your child write a sentence about that photo. You can also put together a puzzle or play another favorite game.

***If you are stuck as to what you can do during this time block, feel free to contact your child's special education coordinator for ideas to try.

Play Break

This is like recess. Time **OUTSIDE IN THE YARD** will be so important. In fact, if the weather is decent, set up some special outdoor activities such as a sand box with items hidden in it to discover. Pull out your summer yard games or set up your volleyball net. Practice soccer or ball games.

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Snack

If possible, have your child help make the snack. Spread the peanut butter on the celery sticks. Dish up the yogurt in a bowl and sprinkle with the blueberries. Count out 20 goldfish crackers into 3 baggies. Have your child serve YOU!

Table Time

Have another set of activities that may include math concepts or learning games. Again, this will be individualized to your child. Sorting, pegboards, puzzles, picking up small items with a tweezers might also be the learning your child will do. To reward your child's efforts, **take a photo or tell your child you are going to email or text someone to show off their good work!** Again, your child's teacher may be sending home some learning activities. Do those and modify as needed.

Lunch Time

Again, lunch preparation can be a great way to delight a child with a new responsibility. Perhaps you want to get a picnic basket on some days and take lunch outside. Maybe you want to throw a quilt on the living room floor and have an indoor picnic. If your child always has a lunch box at school, consider helping your child pack that lunch box and eating from something familiar.

Play Break

It might be helpful to alternate toys or to pull out something your child has not seen in a while. Setting out the larger blocks one day in the middle of the living room or putting up the soccer goal net one day outside might keep play breaks novel and fun with a smaller group of people playing. Setting up an obstacle course or building a tent from sheets in the living room for playing with dolls might create less boredom as the days go on. Spice it up. Surprise your kids. Remember something YOU loved to do as a child and teach it to them.

Bunk Time

Even summer camps build in a rest time. Call it what you wish, but consider having books or a diary or quiet music on and everyone gets a set amount of time to take a break.

Theater Time Choose a show to watch together or movie to enjoy. If you have some home videos of your child growing up, pull those out one day.

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Free Time Hopefully this one can be independent so that you can focus on meal preparation, paying bills, checking email, etc.

***You can continue the schedule through bedtime or simply say that this is when your child usually returns from school so now it's home time. Whatever is easiest for your child.

7. Please know you have support!

Do you need someone to brainstorm with? Are you running low on ideas? Are you encountering a behavior and want some support? Do you want someone to pray with you? Email or phone your child's teacher to navigate this time while you are tucked safely away at home together.