

5 Habits for Working and Schooling Under One Roof

Covid-19, for now, has decimated the traditional systems we set in place to work and handle education for our children. As families grieve the familiar routines they once carried out a few weeks ago, in the chaos of this unfamiliar and indefinite way of life, new rhythms are evolving in our homes. The habits we begin to consider and practice now will shape our children, our partners, and ourselves in the future.

Each family, each child, and each situation is different, but there are some habits we can all consider to help reign in the chaos and give us all room to grow in healthy ways during this time.

1. Call a Staff—Family Meeting Most offices have a regularly scheduled staff meeting, so why not plan a regular family meeting to see how everyone's doing, to celebrate small victories, to understand needs to be addressed? You may think that you are around each other 24/7, so why do a meeting time? We operate better when we intentionally give our families space to be reflective and share information and questions.

- Set the meeting at a time when there are not other disruptions or distractions. Families become more connected as they talk around the dinner table, but eating can be distracting when trying to set schedules, address needs, etc. Also, turn off all devices.
- For some families, this will feel very natural, but for others, the idea may feel awkward at first. Having a plan or coming up with a list for meetings at work helps the meetings flow more smoothly, and the same will be true for your family meeting.
- As you begin, set some ground rules of listening to one another, not blaming one another, and being willing to work on matters discussed.
- Start the meeting by giving everyone a chance to share some things for which they are grateful, even in this new reality. Paul encouraged the people of the church at Colossae to "show yourselves thankful," as they, like many of us, faced uncertain and unfamiliar days. Modern research suggests that gratitude reduces stress and creates more happiness in one's life. Our family creates a gratitude chain* from strips of paper taped together. During the meeting, each person writes on the piece of paper their gratitude. Once everyone has had a chance to share their thankfulness verbally, you can tape them together like a chain and display them as one. Leave other blank strips of paper out for individual family members to write on during the week to add to the chain.
- As a family, create an outline of a daily schedule. We are in uncharted territory, so if our families are going to continue to move forward, we can use the help of new structures and systems. [Growing Leaders](#) shares some valuable ideas in guiding this part of the family meeting as well called "Home Chats."

CONTACTS & UPDATES

HDI's website and social media accounts provide ongoing updates and resources for preparing your church for COVID-19.

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2. Set Office Hours To shape our families in positive ways during this time, we will have to imagine a new routine, new timetables. Our children feel more secure with a consistent rhythm to our day and knowing what to expect.

- Parents, teachers, and administrators are rethinking the timeframes for formal academic learning; at-home learning does not require the 6-8 hours a day spent in traditional school. Homeschooled grade school-aged children often spend **less than two hours a day on formal learning**. While high schoolers may require more structured academic time, some take as little as **three** hours a day. But at-home-learning can take place in many other ways other than just formal lessons.
- When forming a new daily schedule, consider setting a time everyone will get up each day and a regular time to go to bed each day.
- Every family will have a different schedule, but [Khan Academy](#) gives several great examples to begin to form your family's unique, daily routine.
- You can brainstorm this plan at your first family meeting, then make a poster or print the schedule and post it in a common area (or give each child their own schedule, if different).
- Also, including and discuss times in this schedule, which you will be unavailable because of conference calls or a need to focus on work uninterrupted. That may not happen, but if you share your expectations, your children might surprise you.

Just because we make a schedule doesn't mean it will happen right away, but it allows our families to know what is expected—and they may eventually follow it somewhat. It takes time to get back into the rhythm of school after the summer break, but at least parents and children have the advantage of knowing what to expect when school starts once again. Covid-19 has left families blind of how to operate, so it will help to have some expectations identified as we adjust.

3. Be Flexible Working from home while trying to manage your children's education is new and frustrating for you, but this experience is unfamiliar and can be frustrating for our children as well. They, like us, maybe grieving, the loss of time with friends, the cancellation of significant events valuable to them, regular time training for a sport or learning an instrument, and all the freedoms they once knew. Again, Paul wisely instructs the parents of Colossae as they chart unfamiliar circumstances, "Parents don't come down too hard on your children, or you'll crush their spirits." Our children are adjusting to learning in a new way, as well. Try considering this time as a gift, and focus more on connecting with your child rather than correcting them.

- Be flexible and lenient in your expectations of yourself. It's unlikely your kids are going to get behind in school. Many schools plan to cover materials that review what children have already learned in the school year. Many are not planning to introduce any new concepts. If anything, this is a chance for children who were behind to catch up, maybe.
- If you have the option, consider working at night when the kids have gone to bed. To help reduce interruptions from your work, take a 10-15 minute break after each conference call or other work to hang out with your kids for a few minutes. If you have a partner at home, maybe break up the day to give one another time to get work completed or to be alone for a moment.
- If you have older kids, schedule time for them to help younger kids with school or art projects or instruments or to entertain them with a game.
- Remember that learning takes place in a variety of ways. Children learn by being creative with art or building structures with blocks or legos or cooking. They learn by being outside and exploring nature. Many television shows and networks are also committed to education from which children can learn. Physical activity helps young brains develop. Parents of younger children find programs like [Cosmic Yoga](#) helpful for giving them a few minutes to get some work done and keeping their children active and occupied.

4. Connect to the Network Most schools are working hard to get online learning going, but if your child's school is sending home packets of busywork, it may be time to look into a temporary comprehensive online curriculum. There are fully accredited programs and others who have excelled at online schooling for years. Some companies charge a small monthly fee with no contract, some are free, and some are more expensive. While many families are facing a shortage of home computers for everyone to go online with work and school, seek help from your school districts as some are providing these resources.

Looking for an online resource can be overwhelming, but hopefully, your school is working to provide your child with the appropriate resources. Each family and child is unique, and this may be an opportunity for you and your child to explore other ways of learning that may be more beneficial for them.

Here are a few places to start:

Free

- o [Kahn Academy](#)
- o [K12.com](#) (for many states)

Reasonably priced with no contract

- o [Acellus: \(powerhomeschool.com\)](#)

Fully Accredited (Private school-tuition based)

- o [Acellus.com](#)

With any online learning option, look into apps like Google Family Link or Apple Family Sharing to limit access to only the educational sites your child uses for formal learning.

5. Setting up a Workspace Just as having a regular schedule is important, having a designated physical space for formal learning, helps create healthy rhythms as well.

- o Some homeschool families choose to set a separate room in the home designated as a classroom, or if they don't have space, they use a dining table for the area where all the children work. For many families having multiple children in one place does not work. Some children find success doing schoolwork in their bedrooms room at a desk or designated workspace. Other children may find toys or other items in their rooms distracting. The dining table, a specific chair or couch, or even outside are all fine places to do schoolwork. The main idea is to designate a particular area for formal learning to take place.
- o Working parents and caretakers need a designated space as well. If you are fortunate enough to have a separate room with a door and depending on the ages of your children, you might find creating a sign for the closed-door, indicating if you are on a call or need a few minutes of uninterrupted time. Again, they may interrupt, but they may decide to wait a few minutes to call out your name again.
- o Remember to remove phones, other devices, and other distractions from the workspace during formal lessons for children.

*The Gratitude Chain activity comes from [Brain Highways](#).

Sources:

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