

TOP 10 PARENT-CARER TIPS FOR SURVIVING THE LOCKDOWN



Reaching Families

Summary

The following list of tips and strategies is based on information provided by West Sussex parent-carers who participated in our survey on the impact of the coronavirus. At the end of the survey we asked parents if they had any positive experiences, hints, tips or suggestions they would like to share with other families. This is what they had to say...

Getting Outside

"It has been nice to spend quality time together and get outside and exercise"

The warm weather has been a silver lining during the pandemic and a number of families commented that using the garden or going for walks is a really important way of maintaining both physical and mental well-being whilst giving children a chance to burn off energy and escape the cabin fever of being indoors.

Creating a Routine

"We keep to the same routine every day. It has really helped my son's anxiety"

For many children with SEND routine, consistency and predictability are key to maintaining well-being. This was turned upside down as a result of the pandemic so parents have been busy creating new structure and routine to help their children. Some have a detailed timetable of activities planned throughout the week, other focus on regular times for school work, play, screen time, bed time, etc. The key thing seems to be finding what works best for you!

Teaching Life Skills

"We have a lot of time to teach life skills – this was a lot more difficult before the lockdown"

Tying shoe laces, cooking, using the washing machine, making the bed, even growing vegetables - these are just a few of the life skills parents have been teaching their children since the lockdown. Some families are using the additional time they have to focus on life skills, others are doing so instead of or as a part of their children's home learning.

Don't Stress About Home Learning

"Try to make home schooling fun, so that it's a positive experience with good memories you can share with your kids in the future."

Home learning has been a source of enormous stress for many of our families. Many children struggle with the changes in routine and doing school work in their "safe space" so



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in response a lot of families have taken a relaxed approach to learning at home. Some focus on school work in the morning or breaking it up in to small time slots, others are encouraging their children to adopt their own learning project, learning through play or taking advantage of the array of online learning opportunities available to children. As one parent said, "don't try and be a teacher, you're a parent!"

Take the Pressure Off

"Try to take the pressure off you and your young person"

In stressful times like these families tell us its really important to take the pressure off themselves and their children – whether that's taking a more relaxed approach to school work and not pressurising children to complete everything they have been sent by their school, worrying less about bed times or just accepting some days are better than others!! Either way, it's all ok.

Slowing Down

"The lockdown is allowing us time together as a family that normal life didn't – and the slower pace is nice!"

The lockdown may have forced us to stay home but it has also meant our lives have slowed down and given us more time to spend with our families. For some families this has been a welcome break from juggling demands of school and work. Times like these don't come along very often so learning to appreciate the slower pace of life and learning to relax might be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Stay Connected

"Go on online support groups and share your feelings. It's ok not to be ok."

Many parents are staying connected by joining online sessions like our Virtual Umbrellas group. A number of organisations are maintaining contact and giving members support this way. We all know parent-carers say their best source of support is other parent-carers so staying connected now might be more important than ever.

One Day at a Time

"Just take each day as it comes"

In exceptional and uncertain times like these it is difficult to think about the future or plan ahead. Add to that the emotional pressure families are feeling and it's not surprising so many are choosing to take it one day at a time. It takes the pressure off parents and children and allows us to live in the moment. As one parent said, "if today is a disaster, try again tomorrow".

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Manage the News

“We are taking each day as it comes. We don't have the news on whilst our kids are about. Myself or my husband will look once a day on social media and that's it.”

The news can be so overwhelming at the moment its no surprise that many families are choosing when and how often to consume news. Some families have been catching up with news headlines once a day, others make sure children are not around before doing so. Children can find it difficult processing what they hear on the news so managing what they see and hear is essential to their well-being.

Prioritise Mental Health

“Spend time connecting as a family and prioritising mental health”

Whatever else we can do right now, nothing is more important than the mental health and well-being of our children and ourselves. One day all of this will pass, in the meantime all we can do is be kind to ourselves and each other, remember we are only human and doing the best we can. Nothing else really matters!!

Further information and resources

Reaching Families have adapted its services to meet the needs of parents during the pandemic. In particular we are delivering the following:

- Providing up-to-date **INFORMATION** on Coronavirus including researching and publishing a series of relevant **FACTSHEETS** for our families.
- Delivering **TRAINING WEBINARS, VIDEOS AND LIVE CHATS** on relevant subjects like anxiety, behaviour, food issues, home-schooling, mindfulness and resilience
- Providing affordable access to emergency **TELEPHONE COUNSELLING** for parents struggling with mental health issues
- Providing **TELEPHONE BEFRIENDING** to parents who would benefit from the emotional support and understanding of another parent-carer. We can offer up to 6 sessions to parents who access this service
- Delivering weekly **UMBRELLAS SUPPORT GROUPS** by Zoom
- For further information on the above projects and services please visit www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/stayconnected.html

