

COUNSELORS' CONNECTION

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Tips for Making Online Learning Less Stressful and More Productive

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to spread, schools across the country have gone remote. According to the publication 'Education Week', school closures due to coronavirus have impacted at least 124,000 U.S. public and private schools and affected at least 55.1 million students.

The job of educating students falls first on teachers to create online classrooms, lessons, and activities. But, to complete those activities, parental guidance will be necessary. While this is a very stressful time, it's important to schedule, organize and plan in order to get the most out of the online learning experience.

Dr. Hurst-Della Pietra, Founder and president of 'Children and Screens', comments that, "This is a stressful, unpredictable time for everyone, including families, parents, and children. You can help your children by providing them with a structure and routine, and being a positive force in their education." Here are 8 tips for reducing stress and making online learning a more productive experience.

1. **Limit distractions.** A "digital quarantine" might be necessary to keep your child's attention focused on their schoolwork. You should limit their use of their devices, other than what is needed to complete their work, until their schoolwork is done. If you choose, you can allow your child to play on a device during a designated break, but make them aware that they only have a limited amount of time until they need to get back to work.
2. **Make a space for learning.** Many adults have a specific area of the home in which they do work, and it's important that you create a similar space for your child. Your children will achieve their best work in a quiet, comfortable, and dedicated space that is strictly devoted to learning. This space should be a different set-up than where they normally play games or watch television.
3. **Create a schedule.** Keeping to a daily work, play and sleep schedule for your child is extremely important. To start, experts recommend keeping them on the same or similar sleep schedule that they have when they are going into school. Having a clear vision of what is expected of your child will help them see that just because they are home does not mean they don't have work to do. Experts recommend helping them prioritize and learn to create goals, tasks, and deadlines, just like adults do when they go to work.

4. **Take breaks.** Routines and schedules are extremely important for children at school, and this is no different in their at-home school. Children will function best if they maintain their routine as close to normal as possible. Setting alarms similar to those they would encounter at school can be helpful for keeping them on a schedule. Around lunch time, encourage them to get up, get some fresh air, go for a walk or bike ride, or have a snack so that they are not sedentary for the entire day.

5. **Allow children time to interact with friends via video chats.** Children are used to lots of social contact at school, so they will definitely feel the effects of being distanced from them even after a few days. While it might not be safe for your kids to see their friends in person, you should allow them to interact with them online, beyond social media or text messaging. Video chats are often the closest thing to seeing someone in person, and are a great way to get in social time without endangering yourself or others. If your child does not regularly video chat with their friends, you can speak with other parents to set up a video chat playdate.

6. **Mix screen time with old school learning.** Overuse of screen time can have adverse impacts on young brains, so it's important to mix it up during a time like this. It's likely that your children will want to continue to use a screen of some sort during their breaks from doing work, so it's important to limit screen time by mixing in old school mediums as well. As much as possible, parents should encourage print and book reading.

7. **Make sure children know that this is not vacation time.** Time at home away from in-person school might feel like a vacation for your child, but it's important to remind them that they are indeed at school...it's just moved on-line. Expectations and obligations like attendance, class assignments, grades, tests, etc. are not going away just because classes are online. Leaving class without permission by clicking out or walking away or playing with toys and/or pets during class time is not permitted while at school, both in-person and online.

8. **Remember to schedule time for fun.** During free time away from class, it's important to have some fun with your children while they are at home. It's rare that you have this much time with your children, so use it as an opportunity to bond. Family card games, charades, chess, or getting outside for a bike ride, hike or walk together will help everyone to de-stress so that the online learning experience does not become so overwhelming.

(Information for this newsletter was gathered from "9 tips for parents navigating online learning with their children due to Coronavirus" by Jennifer Fabiano of theadders.com)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Eye Thrive will offer free vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses at six St. Louis County Library locations in September and October 2020. Please call or text 636-789-8740 for more information.



Please see resource flyers attached to the email for additional information.

The YMCA Enrichment Program (YEP) offers Hazelwood families full day childcare. The primary focus is students' remote learning activities but will also include STEAM experiences, creative arts, physical activity, literacy, and social emotional learning. Visit www.gwrymca.org/YEP to learn more and register.



Free Mobile Market every Tuesday from 6:30-8:00
3515 Shackelford Road 63031



The St. Louis Area Foodbank can assist with:

- enrolling in SNAP benefits (314) 528-8622
- locating a food pantry (314) 292-6262 or www.STLFoodbank.org/find-food
- locating mobile food distributions www.STLFoodbank.org/events
- connecting you with a United Way representative to connect you with resources for basic needs, healthcare, and more (2-1-1)

