

What To Do When Your Kids Are At Home (Quarantined)

When your kids are home for an extended period of time, such as is happening across the world at the moment, you might wonder how you're going to keep them occupied, get anything done or stay sane!

In our area, schools and nurseries are closed for at least six weeks. All activities have been canceled. Pools, sports centres, libraries, and other entertainment centres have closed.

And whilst my kids would LOVE to play with other children, have playdates and sleepovers, the reality is that the whole point of all the closures is to keep kids away from each other and have people stay as close to home as possible and remain in their family units.

So, keeping the kids occupied, staying sane and still getting stuff done are totally reasonable concerns!

Below are some things to think about during these uncertain and unusual times:

STRUCTURE

Children need to have some sort of structure to their day. It doesn't have to be an hour-by-hour playbook, but some general structure to the day and routine to the week will keep everyone sane and help them (and you) to know what's happening and coming up next.

Having some sort of structure or routine stops all the questions of "what are we doing next?" Or "can we watch TV now?"

GROUND RULES

If you've got children ages 4+, meet as a family and agree some non-negotiables. Such as getting dressed, personal hygiene (teeth, etc), making their bed, keeping their room tidy, etc.

You might also agree household responsibilities - such as helping set/clear the table, load/unload the dishwasher, doing the laundry, helping clean, helping prep/cook meals, etc.

FAMILY PROJECTS

If you're all home for an extended period of time, getting everyone involved in a common, family project might be a productive way to spend a part of each day.

You might work on decluttering/sorting, creating photo albums, creating a family movie, or even just doing a family jigsaw together. Having a common objective where everyone contributes can strengthen family relationships and also be fun!

UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

All children need daily unstructured playtime which benefits their brain functioning, creativity, processing, and imagination.

If your children are not used to having this time, then to start out with you may need to set them up with some ideas or props. If they begin to moan, listen to them and be empathetic and then help them go back to it.

This is also time that YOU can use to get on with other things or do something for yourself.

QUIET TIME

It's worth enforcing some quiet time into each day as well. It could be anytime, but right after lunch or right before/after dinner often works best. This might be 30-60 minutes where the children are expected to do some quiet activity that doesn't involve you. It might be reading books (or looking at them if they can't yet read). Or just playing quietly by themselves or with their siblings. The point is that it's not rough and tumble time, screen time or involving mummy time.

If you personally get replenished from tucking into a good book or having a little nap, this can be a great time to do so.

FRESH AIR

Kids need fresh air and exercise to stay healthy and sane. So make sure they get outside every day, even if it's just for 30 minutes.

Go for a family walk, bike ride, do some outdoor HIIT or just get them out into the garden playing.

LEARNING TIME

If you're keen for your children's brains to not go to mush during extended time off from school, you might consider planning in some "learning" time. This could be "lessons" with you, online learning or other self-study time - age appropriateness is key here.

If you're creative, love being involved with your kids and have the resources, by all means run the lessons yourself. But if you're not used to doing this sort of activity with your kids, there are many great online resources out there to guide you and your child so that your involvement is minimal but your child is still learning great stuff.

SCREEN TIME

Whether it's the TV, ipad, video games or phones, ensure that you have set limits for how much screentime is acceptable and under what conditions. So, you might say that the kids need to have their fresh air and responsibilities done before they can have x amount of screentime. Although there are guidelines for what is appropriate screen time limits for each age group, you know your own child and what they can/cannot tolerate so use your expert parental judgment.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

[Access a list of 40 boredom-busting fun activities](#) to keep the kids busy in the [FREE MyParentToolkit Resource Library](#).

Print out and keep this reference handy, or check the items off as you go to see how many you and your family can complete!

There are a TON of resources online for all ages of children.

Often the most "challenging" to keep entertained are toddlers and preschoolers, and for those, I highly recommend checking out my friend Jamie's ["Hands on As We Grow" website](#) (affiliate link).

She has an unbelievable amount of educational and fun activities for little kids, all with easy to follow resource lists, instructions and ideas, a lot of which are FREE to access (and her monthly membership and activity packs are pretty awesome too!).

[Hands on As We Grow website](#)

TAKING CARE OF YOU

Having the kids homebound and without external activities can be trying on everyone.

Everyone will need some personal space and time on their own, as well as time together.

And more than ever, you will need to make sure you are creating some sanity time for yourself and looking after you. It's too easy to fall into the trap of caring for everyone else and putting everyone else's needs first.

Remember, especially as we are in this situation due to a health matter, you need to stay strong and healthy - mentally and physically - so that you can be there for your family.

Article from myparenttoolkit.com