

## Tackling the Homeschool Blues

4/7/2020

Sarah here. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: being a parent is hands-down the most demanding job in the world. It's also the most rewarding job in the world. But it's incredibly challenging, even in the best of times. And, moms, things are far from the best of times right now. Right now, many of us are facing unplanned, uncharted territory...we are working from home, we are trying to keep our households running *and*...we are now homeschooling our kids. We are now moms *and* teachers. And, it is overwhelming! Juggling demands was hard *before* the stay-at-home order was issued and *before* virtual school began.

So, I'm not going to act like this new juggling act is a piece of cake. I'm not going to say that this is going to be over before you know it. I don't know how long this will last and I don't know what else may change. What I do know is that we are going to make things work the best way we can. When I think about the blogs that Lisa and I have written over the past few months, I think we were inadvertently prepping for this very unanticipated event. All of that talk about accepting less than perfection, being intentional about what you do and don't do, taking care of yourself, having the social support you need, being aware of what roles you fill and being comfortable with delegating responsibilities to others...all of those blogs were unintentionally filled with guidance to help you understand how to manage things right now.

Your whole family is likely at home all (or at least most) of the time. You still need to do your job and now you also need to teach and supervise your kid(s) throughout the day. So, do yourself a favor and create a schedule that works for you and your family. It would be easy to sleep in as late as possible and let your child(ren)'s sleep determine your wake time and the day's schedule. But, doing that could mean you are running behind all day. Remember that being intentional at the front end may decrease your stress later on. So, caregiver(s) need to collaborate to establish a *workable* daily routine to allow them to complete their own work and school with their child(ren). If you are more productive in work and less stressed in teaching

your kid(s) when you wake up an hour earlier, then it may be worth it to get up early. If you do better finishing work assignments late at night, after lights out, then burn the midnight oil.

Next, *it's time for a reality check*. Life is far from perfect right now and things *are* going to fall through the cracks. It's time to recognize that you cannot do *everything* to the best of your ability. So, decide where to accept less-than-greatness. We know you love and want the best for your child(ren). But, given the current state of things, would it be okay if your child(ren) finished out the schoolyear with less than perfect grades? What if (s)he did the required work but didn't do supplemental lessons, readings or assignments? Would *you* be okay with not going above and beyond as your child(ren)'s teacher? Decide where you can adjust your standards.

I strongly encourage you to look for ways to examine your standards in various domains of your life, including your child(ren)'s education. You may normally focus on your child(ren)'s grades. Right now, given the disruption in your child(ren)'s routine and education, the disruption in *your* routine and the fact that your child(ren) probably no longer have trained educators teaching them for most of their lessons, are grades the best measure of mastery and success? Your kid(s) need to learn the basic skills required to move forward. While you want them to be engaged and interested, is it okay if they are a little sulky or salty, since they are trapped at home with their parents who are now also their teachers? In other words, is it more important that your kid(s) *do the work* or that they do it *with a smile*? So, *your* metric of success right now may be that mandatory lessons and assignments get completed. Period.

Finally, over the coming weeks, notice what it is like for your child(ren) to learn and use the information to make your lives easier. Parents often wonder how their kids are in the classroom. Clearly, learning at home from a parent is very different from learning at school from a teacher. But school closures are giving parents a glimpse into their child(ren)'s academic experience. If your child has a meltdown when she is too tired, break up work into smaller chunks. If your child gets oppositional around midday, consider that he may need lunch a little



earlier than you planned. If your child seems to be struggling with math, go back to the basics to strengthen his skills, boost his confidence and decrease your conflict in the long run. Follow-up less preferred subjects with incentives or preferred activities.

So, you see, there are lots of little things that you can do to make homeschooling a little simpler. These ideas won't make life go "back to normal" but they may decrease the stress experienced by you and your family. In the less-than-ideal world we're facing, it's critical to work *with* your family to succeed at home, in work and in your relationships.