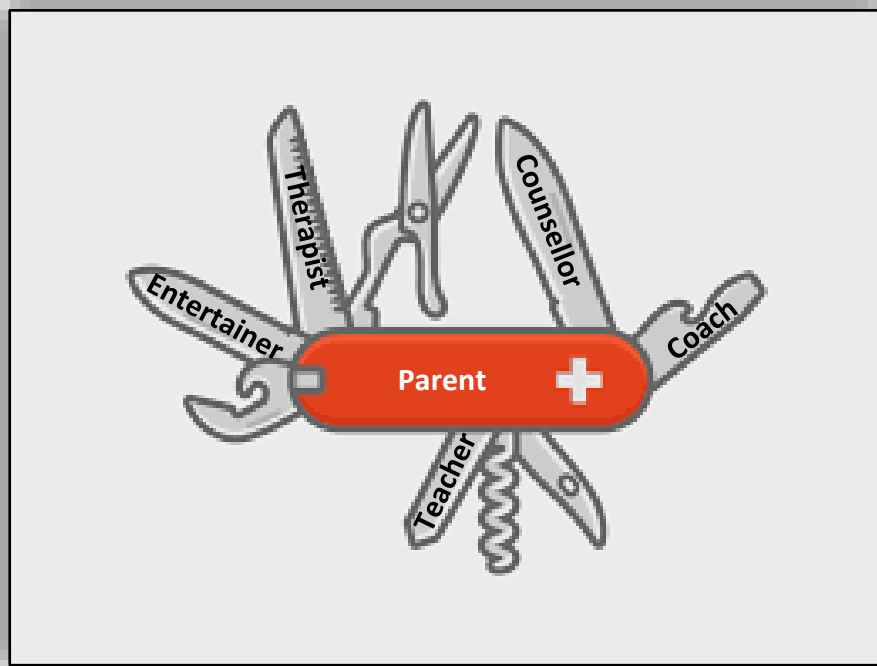


Managing Some of the Challenges of Quarantine

Supporting your child's education in Covid 19

As parents you have found yourself being asked to take on many roles in caring for and supporting your families during this pandemic.



One such role is that of teacher. Many parents are reporting that this is challenging. Replicating the classroom environment, staying on task and completing homework have been some of the activities that have been reported by parents as being an added pressure within their day.

Adult and child routines have also changed and for all of us the world has become a less secure place. This may have led to feelings of anxiety or insecurity. You may have noticed changes within your own usual coping strategies and changes in your child's behaviour and emotional state. It is important to remember to be gentle with yourselves currently. Look and see all that you have done yourself and together as a family. You might be surprised.

Traditionally the summer term has often been the fun term. Children often get the opportunity to experience education in a different less formal manner. There are tours, sports day and nature walks that typically accompany the term but this year that is not an option.

If you are finding yourself in this position, checking in with your school can be a useful first step. They will want to hear how it is going for your child and you can talk to them about the expectations, challenges and demands that this is posing for you and your child. Along with guidance from your child's school there are some approaches that you may find useful to build into your family life. This is by no means an exhaustive list or activities that you must do but ideas that you might like to try out and adjust to meet your needs.

Acknowledge feelings

Children of different ages express feelings differently. Check in with your child and ask how they are doing. Acknowledge to them that these are unusual times and what they are feeling is ok. Notice when your child is coping well and tell them that.

Manage your own Anxieties

Try to take time to do activities that you find calming, a small walk, a bath, chat on the phone with a friend. Try to address issues with your child when you are calm. Practice what you are going to say before you say it. If there are two of you parenting, try to be on the same page.

Reduce exposure to media

Many wellness sites have advised reducing the amount of news that we expose ourselves to. Pick a time in the day that you listen to or look at news so that you are up to date with current advice. Constant exposure can leave us worried and getting stuck in a negative thinking loop. Listening to music, watching favourite programmes can be very relaxing.

Protect parent child relationships

Your relationship with your child is important for the two of you. Have a little fun together, watch a movie, play a game, spend time outdoors. Focusing on play and fun can help you both cope with the stresses of this situation.



Feeling Stressed? Please Take One									
Listen to your favourite music	Go for a walk	Sit in the sun with a coffee	Read your book	Watch a movie	Talk with a friend	Get your kids to tell you a joke	Take a long bath	Order take away	Have a power nap

Routine



A predictable routine allows children to feel safe, and to develop a sense of mastery in handling their lives. As this sense of mastery is strengthened, they can tackle larger changes: walking to school by themselves, paying for a purchase at the store, going to sleepaway camp.

In these uncertain times it can be challenging to maintain a consistent routine. All you can do is your best, try not to make a rod for your own back. You might find the following tips and the links to resources at the end of the page useful.

Help children plan their own routine

Encourage your child to start planning their day. As well as doing their schoolwork maybe they could choose what's for dinner and help with the prep, play games in the garden hanging out as a family.

Using Reward charts to support Homework

In conjunction with your school talk about whether a reward chart would be a useful method to help your child with their routine.

The guiding principles behind using a chart are:

1. **Relevant but reasonable** – giving rewards your child values but are affordable– stickers or points collected up for a special event or small treat. There is no limit to the opportunities for creativity here, perhaps your child has to gather a number of Lego blocks over the course of the day, or they tick items off a list, or send their grandparent a photo of each task as it's completed.
2. **Fair** – use a similar approach with all your children.
3. **Selective** – giving rewards only when children behave in the expected way.
4. **Clear** – making sure your children understand what is being rewarded.
5. **Timely** – rewarding as soon after the desired behaviour as possible.

6. **“As good as their word”** – always following through on what is promised, once a reward is achieved it cannot be taken away or used as a punishment.
7. **Motivating** – encouraging “trying” to complete the homework-it doesn’t have to be perfect
8. **A team** – with both parents (if there are two) using the same approach.

Having the chart on the fridge/notice board can be a great motivator for your child and may encourage them to keep trying and build on successes.



Important-if a reward chart is adding stress or tension in your relationship, stop using it. Check in with your school, check in with Enable Ireland to see how best your child can be motivated.

It’s ok to take a day off too.

Useful Online Resources

You can make a chart with materials at home, your child can join in, you can also download them from **freeprintablecharts.com**

- Stress Busters from Save the Children:
<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/17282/pdf/ch1426389.pdf>
- Using Reward Systems for Children and Young People with Additional Needs: <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NCSE-Resource-3-Using-Reward-Systems.pdf>
- Behaviour Support Pack for Children and Young People with Additional Needs: <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NCSE-Resource-1-Behaviour-Support-Pack.pdf>