



How to reduce the stress of home-schooling for everyone, Mrs Wardle Wellbeing at Cavendish school.

With schools across the country still closed, parents are trying to navigate the unusual situation they find themselves in, managing the rigours of home-schooling while running household activities and trying to work from home and earn a living during this economic crisis. Everyone around the world is struggling to manage this “new normal” as routines are broken, life as we know it is uncertain and your children are probably showing some unusual behaviours. Being in a prolonged period of uncertainty eventually starts to take its toll, your children may be displaying some big feelings and possibly challenging behaviour.

Children and parents are struggling with the expectations of home learning children can become anxious about falling behind or even wanting to engage with their learning. It is difficult to distinguish this new learning environment in their homes that is now their classroom. Children who never before showed any behavioural or emotional challenges are now finding things difficult to negotiate. I will lay out a few strategies to help during this challenging time;

1. Simplify: Relax your home-schooling expectations to a level appropriate for a worldwide pandemic.

As a parent, if you are now trying to frantically balance remote work and home-schooling, your household may be feeling frantic and you may feel out of control. You are trying to manage your own workload while teaching children at different ages, you are fielding hundreds of questions on different topics and everything seems chaotic. Realistically if you are trying to do all of these things to the same standard, you will notice that it just is not possible, being a parent, teacher and professional all at the same time is just not achievable. Constantly wishing that things were different is an exercise in frustration and can make everything feel worse, trying to **accept** what is happening can actually alleviate a lot of the frustration and can improve your mental well-being. Try practising these mantras about simplification;

- I am not ‘home-schooling’. I am doing my best to help my children learn at home during a crisis.
- I am not ‘working from home’. I am doing my best to work from home during a crisis.
- I cannot be as productive as normal because these are exceptional times. I will focus on what I can accomplish by focussing on just 1 day at a time and let go of what I cannot accomplish right now.

Having gratitude is another way of developing well-being. Even during challenging times there is opportunity to be grateful and to accept that which you can and cannot accomplish in a crisis.

A simple strategy for you as a family to start your day well is to either write, draw or say one thing that you are grateful for, one thing that you would like to do and one thing that you will let go of or accept. Starting your day with gratitude can set a positive tone for the day ahead. Having achievable targets for the day will encourage a stronger sense of well-being as you will be free of feeling as if you are falling short of reaching unachievable standards each day.

2. Structure: Keep calm and keep structure

Try to keep your and your children’s routines as close to the normal working / school week as possible. Having a routine and predictability in place can ensure calmness during stressful times. If you find resistance to your schedules, then here are a few reminders;

- Do not force the schedule, work in collaboration with your children on a schedule that works for everyone.
- If things don’t go according to plan, that is fine, each day is a new opportunity to fine tune whatever has not been working.



- Your job as a parent is not to replicate the rigours of a full school day, but to ensure that your children feel safe and do their best with distance learning plan that has been set for them by school. Of course there should be bits of time for school work, but also include breaks, outside learning in the form of walks, exercise, opportunities for fun, hands-on learning activities and family connection. Involve your children in the planning process to get their involvement, don't forget to add some emotional check-point times to make sure everyone is coping well.

3. Support: Get ahead of the emotional spikes (teach critical social –emotional skills)

When children are experiencing some big feelings, they may display these in challenging behaviour. If you feel that their melt-down may be about something really small, don't discount it as this could be a sign that they are overwhelmed or their emotions are heightened.

It is important to remember that neither children or adults have control of reasoning skills and thinking when emotions are running wild. If you find that your children are struggling with school tasks or you see them having a melt-down or become withdrawn, it is likely because they are having a hard time meeting expectations and are already feeling stressed.

It is important to empathise with how they are feeling. Empathy is a powerful way to calm the nervous system and improve our thinking and reasoning part of the brain. Try using the following mantras during a meltdown;

- My child is not *giving* me a hard time; my child is *having* a hard time.
- Behaviour is communication; my child is telling me that they are struggling and need support.
- Trying to teach your child while having a meltdown is not appropriate. Try and calm your child with empathy first.

Navigating this 'new normal' is not about creating academic excellence but rather about providing safety, belonging and acceptance. It is important to help your children to manage their big feelings during stressful times. Here are a few tips that may be helpful to teach emotional regulation skills;

- Develop some calming strategies before your children need them. Post them somewhere visual where everyone in the household can use them.
- Make sure you are looking after yourself and are displaying behaviour you want to see in your children, they will follow your lead. Sharing the experiences together will strengthen bonds and help everyone to feel connected and safe.
- Below are some websites and videos to help during this difficult time.

[NSPCC has fantastic tips on supporting yourself and your children during Covid-19](#)

[Child Mind Institute has some great tips for nurturing and protecting children at home during Covid-19](#)

[Unicef has put together some great tips for parents to support their children during Covid-19](#)

Learning Mole has put a video together with Home-school Tips for Primary aged children, click [HERE](#) to watch it.

Hazel Davis has put together a short video about how to go about making home-schooling work well for everybody, click [HERE](#) to watch it.

Please don't forget to use our designated email address for any questions, concerns or just to make contact we would love to hear from you; wellbeing@cavendish.e-sussex.sch.uk

