



Managing Stress and Avoiding Parental Burnout in the Age of Coronavirus: Part II

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If you're a parent, you're probably thinking that teachers aren't the only group of grownups struggling in the battle to educate kids amidst a pandemic! In our last article, we focused on ways to prevent teacher burnout, and the importance of taking time for oneself to refresh and recharge. But parents are also faced with a tough task this fall in managing their kids' schools, oftentimes at home, all while managing their own work and responsibilities!

While it may seem an impossible task, it's equally important that parents create ways to give themselves a break to relieve stress. Avoiding burnout helps both children and parents maintain their mental health and well-being as they navigate this strange school year.

If you're a working parent struggling to keep up, you're not alone. Families around the country are faced with managing at-home learning, while simultaneously working in their

own profession. In many cases, this leaves them with no other choice than hiring outside childcare to oversee online classes. If this describes your plight, let's take a look at some strategies for avoiding parental burnout this school year.

Prioritize everyday tasks, activities, and chores

Perhaps the very first task every parent should do to manage the load and relive stress is to sit down and make a list that helps prioritize tasks into different categories. Everyday tasks and chores should be categorized by importance or how often they need to be completed.

For instance, schoolwork may be needed to be completed each day, while laundry and other similar chores may be able to be left for the weekend. No matter what it is, create a draft schedule of your family's week, and prioritize the tasks that need to be done to create a predictable weekly routine. When enacting the plan, follow through and leave the tasks that can wait for another day!

If the kids are learning at home, set a structure surrounding the school day schedule

As a parent, you may be at the mercy of your child's school's schedule, but the real structure can be set at home. Working with what you know of their daily class schedule, fill in all the details surrounding those classes. If kids get breaks throughout the day, allow them time to play with arts and crafts or to go outside during their downtime, and set up "stations" where they could help themselves, just as they would in the classroom.

Wake children up at the same time each morning, and set routines for breakfast, lunch, and snack time. Prepare meals and snacks ahead of time so kids can help themselves. The key is to create structure that helps even young children to be more independent throughout the day to take the load off you.

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Get the whole family in on the daily routine

Some families include kids of different ages, who may be in different schools and grade levels. Regardless of your family's unique composition, be sure to get everyone on the same page. Now that many extracurricular activities have been put on hold, it may be just the right time to do this! Set wakeup, breakfast, lunch, and dinner times at the same

time for everyone in the house during the day. For parents, it's easiest to keep up if everyone is working around a similar schedule.



Keep a family calendar and set reminders on electronic devices

While some families already do this, if yours does not, this might be the perfect time to get started! Invest in a magnetic whiteboard calendar to pencil in each family member's daily schedule and appointments. Keep it in a central location, such as on the refrigerator.

Most importantly, take full advantage of the devices you already have around the house. If you have a home assistant, such as an Amazon Echo, or a Google Home, don't forget that scheduling reminders and alarms are important features of those devices! Encourage kids to become more independent by setting reminders on these devices to move them to their next virtual class or daily routine.

Put yourself first sometimes

Moms and dads are superheroes! They are constantly micromanaging family life and their children's schedules, while often forgetting about their own wants and needs. As a

parent, it's easy to forget about your own needs, but it's important to take some time out for yourself once in a while, too. Schedule date night with your spouse or engage in some retail therapy to get yourself something that you've been putting off for some time.

Set firm boundaries

Sometimes as parents, we get caught up in trying to do everything for everyone else in the family. That's why it's important to set firm boundaries within your own household, and with members of your extended family as well. When it comes to your children and spouse, be sure to set expectations for routines, chores, schoolwork, and more.

Let your family know about your own to-do list and reinforce expectations for what you simply cannot or will not take on. In doing so, children learn to become more independent and hardworking, and it lightens the load on the adults in the home.

Get outside!

Experts have been saying for years that spending time outdoors in nature is good for our health! According an article from the [Harvard Medical School](#), going outside can help in a variety of ways from improving concentration to alleviating our mood to make us happier. Exercise is also well known for improving our mental health, and spending time outdoors will give you an opportunity to walk or jog.

While it may seem impossible when so busy catching up with your professional work alongside monitoring your child's online learning, it's still vital to make time for going outside and enjoying some sunshine and nature. Better yet, bring your children with you to play, and enjoy being outdoors together. Not only will your family love being outdoors to get in some play or recreation, but it can help forge happy memories from simply spending more time together.



Don't feel the need to entertain your children at all times

Think back to your past; did your own parents expend so much of their time to entertain you with endless activities? For most folks, the past represents an easier time, when days were simpler, and children entertained themselves outside.

While the world is a much different place in 2020, don't feel the need to constantly keep up with what others are doing inside and out of the home. Kids have been growing and thriving for millennia without all the technology and extracurricular activities we have today. Relax by freeing yourself of the obligation to entertain the kids at all times.

Find support with friends, family, or the community

While much of the nation is still in the throes of the pandemic and are still told to social distance, it's still possible to connect with friends, family, or opportunities for community involvement and support. Don't forget to make time to contact those you love and be open about the struggles of parenthood during these strange and unpredictable times. Check with your employer or insurer to see if virtual counseling is available and take advantage of any programs available to you.

Practice self-compassion

Have you noticed yourself becoming more and more cynical or negative as the days drag on, regardless the matter or topic? Perhaps you've felt more fatigued and exhausted than usual, and it's hard to get out of bed in the morning.

The symptoms of burnout are a lot like chronic anxiety and depression. Become aware of your own emotions and mood and most importantly, practice self-compassion. It's perfectly okay to feel tired, so acknowledge that you have a lot on your plate! While doing so, move forward by creating utilizing some of the tips from this article to reduce your stress and recover from parental burnout.

Whether you're a parent, teacher, or both, 2020 is a seemingly insurmountable year fraught with lifestyle changes and stress. Luckily, there are many ways for parents to lighten their busy load to manage both working and parenting at the same time. While the current educational landscape with virtual or hybrid schooling complicating many aspects of family and work life balance for parents, the tips above can help improve or prevent parental burnout.

Be sure to follow the advice above, and don't forget that Kids Academy is here to assist you in your child's education with quality ready-made worksheets, coloring pages, and learning apps. Check out all [our learning resources](#).

