

1. Build a daily routine that works for your family

Kids do better when they have structure. Now that children don't have the structure of regular school days consider creating your own family schedule. Your days will flow better when there's some sort of a routine. Our [Self-Care for Parents class](#) can help you develop a plan to fit self-care into your routine.

You can also have a family meeting and build a schedule together with your children. When your children have a say, they are more likely to buy in. Build a realistic schedule that your family will follow. You might want to include lots of detail, or leave it more flexible – whichever works for your situation. The schedule can include:

- Time blocks for you (and your partner) when you need uninterrupted time to work
- Which subjects your child works on and when
- Time blocks for guiding your child with their schoolwork
- When everyone gets up and goes to bed
- Mealtimes
- Break times
- Fun activities

Write your family's schedule down and put it somewhere visible. You can adjust the schedule as needed so that it remains as something that your family finds helpful and wants to follow. The schedule should be a useful guide for your family – not a source of stress.

As you schedule time blocks for work, consider an early morning block to do your most important task for the day, so you can get it out of the way before your children even wake up. Then it might be easier to take a break from your work and get your children started with their daily priorities.

If you and your partner both work from home, you might want to work in shifts, if that's possible in your situations. At the very least, decide who can work uninterrupted at a given time, and who will be available for kids if needed. Communicate ahead of time to avoid stress and arguing.

Try to wake up around the same time every day, followed by a morning routine. Don't just roll out of bed to your laptop, but get ready as you would when you go to the office. Having some consistent routines in this time will improve your mental health.

You might even want to walk around the block every morning and evening as your commute to create a break between work and home.

2. Prioritize and re-set expectations

You might find that you're more productive than usual, or not even close. Some days are probably better than others. You can't expect to give your work and your children's schoolwork a 100% effort. Re-set expectations for you and your family. Be kind to yourself and also your children.

At the end of each day, plan your next workday and prioritize your tasks. That way, you're ready to get started and focus on the most important task first thing in the morning, or whenever your slated time for uninterrupted work is.

The less important tasks can be tackled later. Keep your to-do lists shorter than usual so that you can be available for your children if needed.

Tasks that don't need as much deep focus, such as answering emails, could be done while your child does their assignments next to you, for example.

Let your supervisor and team members know if you are less productive than usual, instead of pretending you have everything under control while your work suffers.

3. Have dedicated workspaces

Whether it's a closet or a nook in the family room, try to have a dedicated space for everyone. This will help with the distinction between work/school and home mode.

Teach your children that when you are in that space, you are working. If you don't have a door to your space, you could use a "do not enter" sign or headphones to signal when you cannot be interrupted.

4. Keep in mind that you are not the teacher

There's a difference between distance learning and homeschooling. Your child's teacher is still responsible for teaching. Your role is to guide your child along as needed.

Let your child's teacher know if your child needs more support or cannot complete all the work. Many teachers ask parents and children just to try their best, and are understanding if all work isn't completed perfectly and on time.

If school is becoming stressful for your family, do reach out to your school for advice and support.

5. Take breaks and have fun as a family

While it can be daunting to combine working from home and parenting, it's also an opportunity to spend more time with your children throughout the day. If you have flexibility with your schedule, you can carve out longer breaks during the day and have a meal, play a game, or go outside with your kids.

Schedule in some fun family time in the evenings, too. You could draw, play a board game, watch a movie, cook together, or go for a bike ride. You can write a list of ideas and let everyone pitch in.

Many people end up working longer days when working from home, but it's important for your wellbeing to wind down and spend quality time as a family.

6. Keep your kids entertained

Your kids' schoolwork should take less time than your workday. If you're not keen on the idea of your kids spending countless hours on TikTok while you keep working, you can come up with alternative options together with your child. You can again write a list that your children can refer to when needed.

Depending on your children's interests, the list can include suggestions such as coloring, dance parties, crafts, sports, or calling their friend or grandparent. There are also many amazing activities online, including:

- **BGCBig's Edmonton's [YouTube channel](#)** includes a variety of activities such as crafts, cooking, and drawing
- Live cameras at **[Monterey Bay Aquarium](#)**
- Art lessons for kids at **[Art for Kids Hub](#)**
- **[National Geographic Kids](#)** includes all sorts of games and videos
- **[Draw with Mo Willems](#)**, the author and illustrator of the Pigeon books
- **[But Why: A podcast for curious kids](#)**
- **[Learn how to code](#)**
- Dav Pilkey, the author of Dogman and Captain Underpants books hosts **[Dav Pilkey at Home](#)**

7. Take time for self-care

These days the time for self-care might be sparse, especially if you're a single parent. Try to be creative and find new ways to take some time just for yourself because you need it more than ever. Managing work, parenting, and school can take a toll on anyone's patience and energy levels.

"I often hear parents say they can't do self-care because they simply don't have the time. I will not disagree that time impacts our ability to complete the types of grand ideas we have of self-care. If you are a single parent with young children, taking an hour or two to have a relaxing bubble bath absolutely might not be a realistic goal for you. If you do have a supportive partner or an ability to step away from your little ones for a full hour or two, that's great! Then your opportunities to provide self-care just grow! But if not, I want to share with you how simple self-care can be to work into our daily schedules," says [Trina Moser, Roots and Wings family support worker with The Family Centre.](#)

Here are her tips:

First and foremost, turn to your senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell – to determine what simple and quick self-care can look like for you. Marvel at something you find beauty in, listen to a funny podcast, cuddle up with a fuzzy blanket, indulge in your favourite chocolate, light up a incense with natural calming effects (like lemon, lavender or jasmine).

Self-care can be as easy as putting on an upbeat song and allowing yourself to dance or sing like no one is watching (or listening!). Sometimes it's as simple as lighting a deliciously fragrant candle you've been saving for a special occasion, or looking through an old photo album from your own childhood.

Sometimes self-care means taking a break from news and social media outlets. Sometimes it's pausing to take a few deep breaths and practise positive self-talk, even look at yourself in a mirror and remind yourself that **YOU'VE GOT THIS**, before you return to the chaos that is parenthood.

Ideally, try to schedule yourself time for at least one self-care activity per day. If scheduling it doesn't work for you, just be honest with your family about when you need a break. Take a minute to explain your feelings, request a quiet space for everyone to focus on positive, solo activities, and then return to the situation to discuss the difference in how you feel.

Remember that self-care can also be an opportunity to create meaningful memories with your family. Kids might not always have the vocabulary to express how they are feeling, but there is no doubt that they are feeling impacts of stress, too, so have them join in on the fun! Have a spa day together, go on an ice cream date, practice a quick meditation outside on a nice day, read a chapter of a book together each day, create a gratitude journal together, plant some flowers or herbs, or go out of your way to do something nice for someone else (one of my personal favourite forms of self-care).

While we might not have complete control over some of the limitations that COVID-19 has put on our lives, we do have some control over what we do with our time. Take this time to model the importance of self-care, *especially* during times when connections to usual supports are limited. It's time to be kind and connect with your inner self; you are working hard and you deserve to be cared for. In turn, your children will learn how to care for and soothe themselves in stressful times, ultimately leading to healthier individuals, families, and communities.