

Working from Home with Children

Manaaki – Be Caring

Lockdown due to COVID-19 has created a chronologically difficult working condition for both people working at home 'and' their young children and teens. To create a 'well' home working environment that can function during this period, it would be helpful to explain to everyone in the family bubble that this situation will create problems, some of which can be resolved and others that cannot be until later.

Whānau – We are Family

Remember, this is a new situation for our children and teens too, in fact this might be the 'worst' thing that has ever happened to them. They may be feeling anxiety because of not being able to fully comprehend the covid-19 situation or feel disconnected from their friends by not having a sense of when they can return to school and normality. Your children will be looking to you for guidance through lockdown. So, frequently remind everyone that this is a temporary situation and it will be over soon. Create a countdown calendar and set achievable goals that you can celebrate together as a family.

Manaaki – Be Kind

Being kind to each other, use kind words and make every effort to empathise with any family member who might be struggling. In the long term, kindness, patience and understanding will help to create a home environment that is safer for everyone's mental wellbeing.

Rangatira – Be Leaders

Make a Plan

Like in the workplace, it is easier to work when you understand what your daily and weekly timetable constraints look like. Hold a relaxed 'meeting' with your children and find out what resources are available to you and what they think would be good activities (inside and outside ideas, exercise, technology, study and movies etc.). Explain to them that you are collecting their ideas so they will not be bored over lockdown. If possible, encourage your children to make a container, box or spin wheel so they have ownership of this resource and let them name it (Boredom Box, The Container of Anti-insanity etc.).

Create a Routine

Implement your work plan and start a routine for your children. Remember that our idea of a working day will not be the same as the expectations that children have for their day. If lockdown is during a school term, then it will be easier to plan your child's day by following their school's timetable. If on holiday, or the timetable is not available, then try to stick to a similar routine and schedule breaks like at school (morning tea, lunchtime and afternoon tea). Set new subjects for their day using the activities from the spin wheel.

Bubbles within bubbles

You may have to designate a specific area as your office so that your children understand the difference between their parent or caregiver being at work and when you are available for play. It might even be helpful to wear your uniform or normal work attire, which is a visual cue to a younger child that you are in work mode. Place a sign on the door, set off a school bell, or similar alarm, to designate the start and end of work or a break time that you can all share.

Work Smart

Be 'agile' and 'work smart' by focusing on results and your performance. Sometimes the scheduled plan will work and sometimes it will not, which will likely be due to the changes in

demands of your child (the small human factor). On these days, accepting that this will be one of those days will help ease the sense of guilt and frustration that you may be feeling. Afterall, these are unprecedented times. In these moments consider your child's 'play' patterns and work around these. If your children sleep in until 10am then begin your day as early as possible. If your child is happy to play quietly in the morning, then focus your work effort accordingly. Schedule work when they nap or while they play in the garden. Will they be happy to sit through a movie in the afternoon and then help prepare the evening meal? Remember to praise their efforts in keeping themselves entertained and for helping with jobs.

Know When to Switch

When you see the signs of cabin fever and frustration in your child. Have they had too much device time or is the game beyond their capability? This is when you should leave your work bubble and help organise and interact in their play. Switch their environment. Play with your pets or take your dog for a long walk. Do they become agitated and extra annoying when they need a snack? Or perhaps you do. Prepare a snack together.

Cooperative Working

Consider adopting a co-operative working style with your partner or members of your family. Be transparent about work deadlines and help your partner achieve them by participating in your children's play activities during the time of stress. Work tag may fit your child's needs best, especially if they are young or extremely active.

Wairua – Be spiritual

Working from home is an opportunity for our children to see our work ethic and how we value what we do for our community. It is also important for children to feel that they are part of a family which means using technology, devices and computers in novel ways to be productive and to connect.

Technology and Virtual Bubbles

Organise and encourage calls between your children and members of your extended family. Opening paths of communication will also help others to feel less isolated and useful, which will be remembered and appreciated after lockdown has ended. If possible, in a different area of your home, use technology to create a bubble where your child can connect with family on a video call.

This is also an opportunity for your child to listen to stories about their family history, learn about their culture and heritage, be helped with a school project, or even receive praise or acknowledgement for what they have achieved from someone other than their parents and caregivers.

Virtual Connections

Technology can also be used to create virtual play dates or to chat with friends and teachers. Or, if your children play sport, it could be used to add meaning to their exercise regime by coordinating it with their team's training session. Encourage them to keep a journal to show how well they are doing and so that they can share their progress with teammates and/or their coach.

Your teens may, or may, not be finding lockdown difficult, it is likely that they will not communicate how they are feeling unless you ask. Quiet teens may be convenient during work, but it may be a sign that they are feeling isolated - so make sure that you reconnect with them in the evenings by playing cards, quizzes or games. Encourage teens to phone or video call friends and not just chat through a phone app. Be interested in their schoolwork and revision. Check in on them to make sure they are working to their timetable and praise their effort. Remember to use NetSafe and keep them safe on the internet.

There are many resources on the internet that are both educational and fun. Show your excitement that your children have the time and opportunity to explore something new. Ask them about their learning journey so that they feel they have a purpose in adding value and meaning to yours.

Resources

Virtual excursions of the world

The San Diego Zoo has a website just for kids with amazing videos, activities and games. Enjoy the tour [<https://kids.sandiegozoo.org/>]

Visit the Smithsonian's zoos or museums. Live videos of the National Zoo and its Learning Labs. [<https://www.si.edu/kids>]

Virtual tours of the British Museum. See the Great Court, the Rosetta Stone and Egyptian mummies: [<https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com>]

Tour Yellowstone National Park – [<https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/photosmultimedia/virtualtours.htm>]

Explore the surface of Mars on the Curiosity Rover – [<https://accessmars.withgoogle.com>]

Visit the Louvre museum: [<https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne#tabs>]

Visit the world: [<https://www.360cities.net/image/great-wall-of-china>]

Interactive video earth science based curriculum supplement: [<https://www.everyday-earth.com/>]

Visit NASA initiatives. Explore the weather, climate, atmosphere, water, energy, plants and animals. [<https://climatekids.nasa.gov/>]

Art

Helps kids learn to appreciate the arts by providing them with the opportunity to play games, conduct investigations, and explore different forms of art. [<https://artsology.com>]

Animals

Virtual tours of farms (minks, pigs and cows, apples and eggs): [<https://www.farmfood360.ca>]

Play games and learn all about animals: [<https://switchzoo.com>]

Maths and Reading

Math and reading games: [<https://www.funbrain.com>]

Fun reading tool. Free trial available.

https://readingeggs.co.nz/gaw/ga3/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI0ZjvyKTX6AIVmB0rCh0NKAJbEAAYASACEgKtI_D_BwE

Educational games K-12: [<http://www.breakoutedu.com/funathome>]

300,000 + FREE printable worksheets from toddlers to teens: [<https://www.123homeschool4me.com/home-school-free-printables/>]

Animals and biology

Geography and animals: [<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>]

Interactive models. Innerbody explores the 11 bodily systems in depth. Learn about the internal mechanics of the amazing human body. [<https://www.innerbody.com/htm/body.html>]

Audio Books

Favourite kids books read by famous people: [<https://www.storylineonline.net/>]

Crafts and Cooking

Crafts, activities, mazes, dot to dot etc: [<https://www.allkidsnetwork.com>]

Fun games, recipes, crafts, activities: [<https://www.highlightskids.com/>]

Daily free science or cooking experiment to do at home: [<http://www.clubscikidzmd.com/blog/>]

Free Weeks of Maker Stations to keep your children creating at home! Each challenge includes simple instructions using materials around the house, QR code video resources, and a student recording sheet: [<bit.ly/freemakerstations>]

Illustrated recipes designed to help kids age 2-12 cook with their grown-ups. Recipes encourage culinary skills, literacy, maths and science. [<https://www.nomsterchef.com/nomster-recipe-library>]

History

Online history classes for all ages pre-teen through to adults: [<https://school.bighistoryproject.com/bhplive>]

Digital archive of history: [<https://www.bunkhistory.org/>]

An interactive way to learn history: [<https://www.mission-us.org/>]

A human visualization platform. Explore the human body in really cool ways. [<https://human.biodigital.com/login?returnUrl=%2Fdashboard>]

Mental health and exercise

Movement and mindfulness videos created by child development experts. [<https://www.gonoodle.com>]

Kid-friendly workouts. Strength, agility, flexibility and balance. Warm-ups and Cool-downs, Stand Up and Move for Kids, Create custom workouts. [<https://app.workit.com/collections/kids-workouts>]

At home OT, PT and ST resources designed to build skills in children through movement and play. [<https://www.theotttoolbox.com/>]