

Parenting While Working Remotely

A significant transformation due to COVID19 has been the school closures, raising challenges for parents, caregivers, educators and students alike. Many faculty, staff and some students had to rearrange their individual, work and family needs, figuring out different expectations for school work, rethinking meals, supplies, and local services, and managing our own and others' anxiety. Below are some suggestions on issues to consider or approaches to managing your new reality. These are just suggestions, understanding that people would have to adapt these to their resources and individual situations.

1. Consider Establishing an Agreed Upon Household Plan of Action and Schedule:

- a. Can you outline an age-appropriate schedule for children? How do you plan for and monitor work and school time?
- b. Can adults identify a schedule non-interrupted time for live meetings or presentations? If there is more than one adult with young children, consider creating "shifts".
- c. Create a joint family schedule to avoid noise conflicts (can you avoid music lesson/practice and parent zoom meeting at the same time)
- d. Establishing family "rules" including basics like meal prep and planning and household chores (cleaning, now greater disinfecting, meal prep and planning, clean up, etc.).
- e. How are spaces used when everyone is now home 24/7? Can you designate quiet and noisy spaces, adult and kid spaces, together and separate spaces? Do you need a space to do confidential work?
- f. How do you resolve issues and power struggles (FSAP? School social workers? Therapist?)



Sample Daily Schedule



Daily Schedule with a Toddler



Example of Family Rules

2. Technology and Data Service Plans and Use:

- a. Have your bandwidth needs increased? Bandwidth or upgrade in plans needed? Do you have enough or the right devices?
- b. How do you establish priorities for work and school use of technology?
- c. Do you need to create temporary "desks" for quiet concentration time?
- d. Do you need to outline individual and family use of equipment limits and schedules (can the bandwidth withstand 3 zoom meetings?)

3. Prevent Online Fatigue

- a. Schedule time to disconnect.
- b. Set realistic expectations for yourself and others in the family.
- c. If possible, decline back to back meetings
- d. Consider putting some breaks and planning time into your schedule to get outside, take a nap, cook, exercise, establish a new playlist, meditation, journaling, maybe establish a regular routine for helping others, make special memories

4. Involve Others for Support (even if it is long distance):

- a. How can educational videos, podcasts, online audible books, movies, be helpful?
E.g. storytelling times Cornell Child Care Center offering story hour via Zoom for Cornell children
- b. Can you use a food service or meal delivery program for a few meals a week, if they offer safe delivery?
- c. Considered virtual babysitting by family members and friends: reading, writing, doing projects while watching them for pre-k and elementary school children?

5. Managing COVID-19 Messages and Social Distancing:

- a. Consider whether messages and ongoing updates is key and age appropriate?
- b. If you overwhelmed with the amount of coverage and social media posts – consider limiting it to fewer hours a day?
- c. Check in with children about their understanding and fears. Consider how you talk to children and manage their anxiety. Acknowledge their anxiety and help them manage it.
- d. Explain social distancing and set clear boundaries with friends, neighbors, etc.

6. If You or a Family Member Gets Sick:

- a. Think of a plan ahead of time. Who needs to be notified: chair? Direct reports?
- b. Follow Tompkins County and CDC directive, recommended and precautions and monitor health signs.
- c. Check in with your physician or care team often.
- d. Practice hygiene and isolation practices: can someone bring you your groceries?

7. Physical and Emotional Wellbeing:

- a. Wellness has resources now online and can do consultations via phone or Zoom.
- b. FSAP (Faculty and Staff Assistance Program) is also available for online consultations
- c. Set a schedule for exercise and movement (online programs offered by Cornell and other free programs)
- d. Please don't forget to calibrate your expectations – of yourself and others – to the times we are in. Communication with your family members, spouse or partner is key! The more pressure we feel to be the perfect anything (parent, spouse, partner, employee, caregiver, nurse, etc), the harder it is to remain present, care for our mental and physical health, work, and be patient and supportive of others. Be kind! WE CAN DO THIS TOGETHER!

Resources for support, information and assistance

University COVID-19 Website:

<https://hr.cornell.edu/covid-19-workplace-guidance>

Cornell Parenting Newsletter:

[Sign-up](#) for this [weekly newsletter](#) to learn about upcoming virtual activities, get ideas for managing family life, and resources available.

Emotional Support and Counseling:

[Faculty and Staff Assistance Program](#) 607-255-2673 or
[ENI Confidential Counseling Services](#) 800-327-2255

Home Work The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County compiled a [comprehensive list of mental health supports and community resources](#) for Tompkins County youth and families. Students outside of Tompkins County may want to check with their locality for a list of resources in their city or county.

Home Working Environment: Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Program (MIPP):

The [Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Program](#) provides virtual ergonomics assessments and offers this guidance ([webinar](#) | [tip sheet](#)) to help you. Working from home? See this helpful video:

[Ergonomics Tips for the Home Office - Creating Effective Work Spaces](#)

<https://hr.cornell.edu/benefits-pay/leaves-disability/musculoskeletal-injury-prevention-program-mipp>

Employee Wellness:

[Cornell Wellness](#) offers free live virtual group exercise classes (Strength Training, Restorative Yoga, Pilates, Zumba, Barre, Power HIIT, and more) - no membership required. Or, use a [recorded exercise routine](#) to get moving. Subscribe to the Cornell Wellness [newsletter](#), follow on [Facebook](#), and/or Instagram.

Community Services for Families and Child Care Providers:

[Child Development Council of Tompkins & Cortland County \(other Counties\)](#)

Ithaca: 607-273-0259, Cortland: 607-753-0106

Child Development Council: Call our Warm Line, a free, confidential and anonymous telephone guidance service for parents and child care providers. Council staff are here to listen and help you find solutions to questions about child development, behavior, how to support your or your child's adjustment to child care (or being home all the time).

Daily Story Hour:

Monday through Friday from 10-11am, join the Cornell Child Care Center teachers as they read to children. [See details](#)

Care@Work by Care.com:

Employees may find errand runners, dog walkers, babysitters, and other helpers. Please practice social distancing and prioritize the health and wellbeing of your family and caregivers in decision making about these services. hr.cornell.edu/careatwork

Additional Resources:

[Staying in sync with your partner during COVID-19](#) (podcast)

[How to Help Teens Shelter in Place](#) (article)

Bring Your Child to Work Day has been re-created!

Cornell has recently created a COVID-19 initiative called **Cornell@Home for Kids**, various presentations by Cornellians and departments (pre-recorded and online live, inside and outside), For example, activities such as yoga and exercise with kids, demonstrations with bees, bats and birds, listening for birds with the Lab of O, showtime with the raptors, planting with master gardeners from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell history and trivia (Tues, April 7TH with Corey Earle), Big Red Activity Book distributed by the department of athletics, see more details at: <https://hr.cornell.edu/covid-19-workplace-guidance/community-resources/cornell-kidshome>