

# Navigating Family Engagement Today

## Schedules/Routines: Part 1

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These are tough times. There is no way around it. Everything in our lives has been disrupted. Nothing feels familiar or normal. Adults are working from home or not working. Children have no school or after-school activities. Many parents feel they shouldn't even set up play dates for their kids. Theaters and other places of entertainment are closed, you can't sit down to eat in a restaurant, and many stores have shut their doors. How do we cope? How do we keep ourselves and our children safe, sane, and able to live differently in positive ways?

One thing we can do is to create a **formal schedule** for our families with our children. We know this will help make life more normal, but it will take some good communication.

And, yes, we mean sitting down with our kids, working together, and developing a formal written schedule (perhaps on a chart, but any paper will do) that will provide stability for the family and meet all kinds of needs (educational, social and emotional, physical, and fun/recreation). But, why should we do that? Here are **eight good reasons**:

1. **Routines are normal and we want life to feel as normal as possible during trying times.** School and activities usually provide most of that. Now we have to do that at home.
2. **Routines provide clear expectations for people and they feel good when they meet those expectations.** Each day, there can be a discussion in the morning about what everyone's goals are for each part of the schedule.
3. **Routines let everyone know what should happen when, avoiding potential arguments.** This can create a calmer household.
4. **When people know what comes next, they learn to be more independent and confident.** They can take charge of their own activities.
5. **Routines that are well thought-out provide a balance** between "serious work" (for children that means academic learning) and breaks for social interaction, exercise, and FUN. Fun is more enjoyable when it is mixed in with meaningful accomplishments.
6. **Routines create thoughtful, healthy, constructive habits.**
7. **Routines let us look forward to what we enjoy** (kids are willing to do math to get to recess).
8. **Routines are like rituals that give meaning to the day and ground us.**

**Don't be afraid to experiment with your schedule!** It might take a few tries to find the schedule that works for you and your family. Make decisions that work for your unique family and adjust the schedule so it supports each of you.

This small piece is the first of several messages we will be sending that are designed to help you and your children make sense of this confusing time. We will follow up soon with **Part 2 – a practical discussion of how to create the schedule with your child(ren)** and **Part 3 - what you might include on the schedule.** Other ideas will follow as well.

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