

Information from ReBBZ

When School Takes Place at Home – Tips for Families

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Schools have been closed due to protective measures against further infections and learning is now taking place at home. This unusual situation offers you as a family the opportunity to focus on things for which there is little time in everyday life. You can use the time to move closer together as a family. Perhaps you can revive old rituals or introduce new ones, such as cooking together, talking to each other, going for a walk, playing or just spending time together.

As a parent, you cannot replace classes or assume the role of the teacher. The school gives your child assignments to be done at home. Your role will be to support and motivate your child. We have put together some tips and suggestions for you so that you can properly structure the next weeks.

How do I organize learning at home?

Completing a stockpile of schoolwork independently is not easy for your child. We want to try to give you some advice on how you can support your child in completing the schoolwork at home which he or she will get from the school in the coming weeks:

- *Get an overview:* Take a look at what is to be done together with your child and plan the week accordingly. Besides the schoolwork there might be obligations in your household.
- *Set expectations and assess the assignments:* Tell your child honestly what you expect from him or her and which tasks you find particularly important. Also ask your child what is important to him or her the next few weeks without school. Some things will not be possible but other things can be decided by your child depending on the age (e.g. what to

start with, or if the child wants to work in the morning or the afternoon). Clarify which assignments are particularly important together.

- *Make a plan:* Write in a weekly schedule which specific tasks need to be done and when. This makes the specific arrangements visible for everyone and prevents misunderstandings and conflicts.
- Agree on **goals your child can accomplish**. Encourage and commend your child. Try to avoid excessive controlling.
- With a **to-do list for everyday** (3-5 assignments) you can divide the „huge stockpile“ into small bits. This makes the work manageable for your child. The checking off of completed tasks on the list also motivates your child.
- *Organize the workplace:* Make sure that your child has a **place for schoolwork which is free of distractions**.
- *Work time and breaks:* You and your child can use a clock or a timer to **limit work time**. Younger children often need a break or a change after 15 min., older ones after 30 min.
- In the event that you think that your child has to accomplish more: **Stick to the defined work times**, even if not all tasks are finished. Talk to the teacher about your concerns.
- *When it's over, it's over:* **When your child has completed the daily assignments, he or she has free time**. Give him or her that time and avoid spontaneous new tasks.

How do we structure the day as a family?

Your every day family life has changed a lot due to the loss of usual activities. Therefore organising your day properly is of utter importance:

- Try to maintain your **daily rhythm**. Arrange times for getting up and going to bed. Stick to familiar rituals, e.g. having breakfast together.
- Plan **shared meals** – in case you need to go to work: Prepare the meals with or for your child. Preparing meals together can be a nice shared activity.
- **Exercise with your child!** Fitness, Yoga or other forms of movement – much can be done in your own living room. Use apps and videos to bring exercises and sports to your home.
- Brainstorm ideas on what to do during free time. Remind yourself and your child of what is fun for him or her (e.g. painting, doing arts and crafts, playing games, making music).
- **Make agreements about media consumption with your child.** Which games and apps is your child using? Are there alternatives? Suggestion: Watch movies in English with German subtitles (older children) or just watch movies together and speak about them (younger children). Limit media time! Use blockers for devices when necessary.
- Encourage your child to find balance through movement and contact with „real“ people. But also see the opportunity presented by media these days. In particular for education and for staying in contact with loved ones and friends. Use the educational television programmes on ARD, ZDF and NDR.

In case it gets tough... - How can we cope with conflicts?

You and your child are around each other more often right now and every member of the family feels the tension of the situation. Conflicts can arise easily. Therefore stay calm, breathe deep

and try to find solutions together. Here are some suggestions to help you achieve this:

- Take your time. Try to resolve conflicts when you are calm, not when you are angry.
- Sit down at a table together. Bring something to write with so you can make a note of the agreements.
- Try to ask yourself in advance what it is about. Determine how much time you have for the conversation.
- Talk about how you and your child perceive the situation. Stay friendly and attentive.
- Both of you should express your **interests, needs** and **wishes**. Take note of the differences. There is nothing wrong with wanting different things.
- Try to find a **common solution** and do not be satisfied until the solution is found.
- In case of escalation, pause the conversation and continue later.

Boredom – not just bad!

If familiar daily routines are disrupted and family members share more time at home, a feeling of boredom can arise at some point due to the monotony. Boredom interrupts usual behaviour patterns and therefore gives the opportunity to discover new skills or rediscover old ones. Children tend to creatively invent new games, imagine stories and experiment with what they find. By doing that, interests and talents can be discovered. One child starts sewing, another fills glasses with water and taps them to make music, a puzzle is made from a magazine or a new cake recipe gets developed. You can use this opportunity to discover new sides of your child.

Boredom also offers the opportunity to let your thoughts run free, to dream and to notice what is good for you and what is missing. And don't forget: „Boredom is the gateway to imagination!“

How can I cope with fear, when it arises?

„Why am I not allowed to go to school?“

„Why can't we visit grandma and grandpa?“

„What happens if you stop going to work?“

The many changes associated with parents' concerns can lead to insecurity in your child. Things we do not understand can frighten us. How can you best react as a parent?

- *Try to stay calm:* Children pick up on their parents' fears and insecurities. Try to take care of your needs and relax. Talk about your concerns with your partner or with your friends and do not pass them on to your child. Try to find out more on official websites so that you can answer your child's questions. **Depending on the age, do not let your child watch the news!** Images can linger in your child's memory and can be unsettling.
- *Try to pick up on what your child already knows:* Your child has been hearing a lot about the coronavirus. Talk about it together. What questions does your child have? Has he or she heard incorrect information or fake news? It is best to look at information together.
- *Explain in a manner appropriate for children:* It is difficult to explain what a virus is, especially to younger children. Child-friendly information can be found on „logo!“, which is the news programme for children on ZDF, and on the website of the Meditricks GmbH.
- *Personal responsibility:* Discuss with your child what you can do as a family to protect yourself from the disease. You can practice washing hands and sneezing or coughing in the crook of the arm. Children enjoy being praised for these behaviours when they get them right. (Video-) phone calls with grandparents or friends are also important to properly deal with the situation.
- *Feeling good:* Conversations are best conducted in a calm atmosphere at home. Take time for your child and reassure them that

there is no need to worry. Common rituals (e.g. shared meals, bringing to bed, reading something to them, playing and cuddling) help your child. It should not be all about the coronavirus. A happy atmosphere at home helps with learning and feeling good.

Information und contacts:

Official websites:

Robert-Koch-Institut: www.rki.de

Bundesregierung: www.bundesregierung.de

Exercise and sport:

Alba-Berlin: www.youtube.com/albaberlin

Websites with child-friendly information:

logo! – news for children on ZDF:

<https://www.zdf.de/kinder/logo/wichtige-infos-zum-coronavirus-100.html>

School radio of the NDR:

<https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/Nach-Schulschliessungen-NDR-Radioangebot-fuer-Schueler,radioangebot100.html>

Meditricks GmbH: www.meditricks.de/cke/

In case of conflict in your family:

Erziehungsberatungsstelle:

<https://www.hamburg.de/erziehungsberatung/>

Parent Phone Hamburg (0800-111 05 50)

The Allgemeinen Sozialen Dienste (ASD) of Hamburg or on weekends the Kinder- und Jugendnotdienst (Tel. 040 428153200)

Die Regionalen Bildungs- und Beratungszentren (ReBBZ):

<https://www.hamburg.de/rebbz/>

There you can find out which ReBBZ is responsible for you. You can also ask for the telephone number of the responsible ReBBZ at your child's school.

Bildungs- und Beratungszentrum Pädagogik bei Krankheit/ Autismus

<https://www.hamburg.de/bsb/bbz/>

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