

How to maintain a positive homeschooling environment

South African families are going through tremendously challenging times as most continue to stay at home during the country's extended lockdown. While it is not yet clear when schools will start to re-open, thousands upon thousands of learners are working hard to stay on top of their educational journeys, while those parents who can do so are still working from home.



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“The current situation facing those parents who are trying to do their best on the work front to ensure the sustainability of their companies and their livelihoods, while having to oversee their children’s schoolwork is without a doubt extremely stressful, and it is important to take a step back and gain perspective at this time,” says John Luis, Head of Academics at ADvTECH Schools.

“It is no easy task to keep children productive and learning at home, while also trying to get your own work done under try circumstances. But we urge those parents who are ready to throw in the towel, and who quite simply have had enough, to aim to regain a sense of equilibrium and a positive environment even if it seems impossible right now,” he says.

Luis says despite the fact that public and private schools are all planning and preparing for the return to physical sites, the approach will be phased, which means that many learners outside of the designated first returning grades will still be learn from home for several weeks and even months.



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“It is very important that the educational journey continues for these learners so that they do not fall behind their peers. But the same time, the situation needs to be managed in a way that no harm is done to the relationships within the family, as a result of this pressure to continue.”

So parents should aim to re-establish a productive yet calm environment even in the face of the challenges of this time, he says.

“One way in which this can be achieved, is by creating a schedule which allows for both family connection and deep focus

time. We as parents must set the example by demonstrating that while things are different, we can build our resilience muscles.

Connect

“In the mornings, before children start their work and parents dive into their to-do lists, make the time to connect – read your children a book, get some fresh air, and just be. When the work starts, be realistic. Don’t try to make your average 9-to-5 happen. Structure the day to allow for work-immersion slots, and during this time don’t feel guilty for not engaging directly with your children. Too much screen time is still not advisable, but if it allows the children to decompress while you can apply intense focus to your own work, it will do more good than harm.”

Assist

Parents should also dedicate some time to being able to assist their children – and must ensure that they can focus on the child’s needs and learning during this time - without running over their own pending work repeatedly in their minds.

“Try to banish your own concerns during this time, and give your child your full attention. It may only be half an hour, but make that half an hour count in terms of connection,” he says.



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Downtime

Finally, everyone should have some downtime together during the day, potentially around lunchtime, he says.

“Build up your reserves for the afternoon shift by going offline, taking a tea break, hanging up the washing, and so forth. It is important for parents during this time to look after our own well-being and state of mind by actively managing these factors and not allowing our fears and anxieties to rule our entire days or our interactions with our families. By realising the need to take a break and then ensuring we maintain positive space and connection despite challenging times, we will be better positioned to continue our lives post-lockdown without having to start rebuilding our personal relationships as well.”

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