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Working with the Kids at Home? Tips from an Experienced Parent



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The ongoing pandemic has made working remotely with kids a reality for many parents. With schools mostly back in person, it's less of an all-day struggle, but with exposure quarantines and canceled aftercare/activities, the kids are still at home more often than usual. Reports on the impact on productivity started coming out this year, and they are not good. Women with children have lost about an hour of research time per day compared to their childless counterparts.

(https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28360/w28360.pdf)

I had the pleasure of unexpectedly becoming a parent at the age of 20 years. As such, I struggled through the second half of my undergraduate career and graduate school. I had to work to complete my coursework and be productive in my research with little people afoot (and often strapped to my chest with a MOBY wrap). My kids are now ages 4-17 years, but before the pandemic I tried to limit my work at home. Who knew all of those earlier lessons would come in handy once again?

A month into the pandemic, my colleague with two young children asked if I had any tips for her. This is what I shared:

- The most important thing to remember is that a primary goal is to minimize stress for you and your kiddos. While longer than anticipated, this pandemic is an unusual situation. I encourage you to keep going with what works for you right now. This might mean more screen time, odd working hours, or having your children on your lap in meetings. The same is true for helping your children keep up with their schoolwork. Just do your best; it doesn't benefit anyone if they get all of their work done but are scarred by their overly stressed-out parent.
- Get the children outside in a fenced backyard or a play yard and find a way to work outside. When the weather isn't nice, try active videos like Go Noodle, yoga, or kid-friendly exercise videos.
- Keep different containers of toys close at hand. This is helpful when (not if, but when) your kids are tired of the toys they are playing with in the middle of your important meeting, you can kick a tub their direction without anyone noticing. Order some cheap new toys or put half of their toys away and rotate them to keep them fresh. Think plastic dishes, blocks, stickers.
- Set up a room with a radio or music for the kids to dance and play. You may want to set a limit on the volume.

- If you are fortunate to have a spouse or partner at home, work out an alternate schedule so each of you has some uninterrupted work time. If this isn't possible, perhaps consider waking up a few hours early for some uninterrupted time or staying up late if you are more of a night owl. Even it is means taking a brief nap with your littles in the afternoon.
- Cut corners in other areas to allow more time for work. The house doesn't have to be spotless (no one is visiting during COVID-19 anyway). I started throwing my littles' clothes in the respective drawers unfolded. If you have older kids, give them an incentive for entertaining your younger children.
- If you have tried these ideas and you are still stressed to the max, consider seeking a nanny who is committed to social distancing. Even if you can only hire him/her for a few days a week or few hours a day, it will help to relieve stress.

I hope these tips are helpful. If nothing else, I hope this is encouraging that all of us parents are in the trenches together! We can choose to find the joy in the situation even though it is stressful.

More Resources

[Working Parents During Coronavirus: Staying Productive & Patient](https://edgeforscholars.org/working-parents-during-coronavirus-staying-productive-patient/)

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[Working Parents: Emergency Supplies for 30 Minutes of Quiet](https://edgeforscholars.org/working-parents-emergency-supplies-for-30-minutes-of-quiet-time/)

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February 3, 2021 at 1:35 pm (<https://edgeforscholars.org/working-with-the-kids-at-home-tips-from-an-experienced-parent/#comment-17535>)

These tips are so helpful – thank you! Wondering if you have any magical advise for getting the teenagers outside?



[\(https://edgeforscholars.org/author/sara-a-myers-phd/\)](https://edgeforscholars.org/author/sara-a-myers-phd/) *Sara Myers, PhD*

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February 3, 2021 at 3:30 pm (<https://edgeforscholars.org/working-with-the-kids-at-home-tips-from-an-experienced-parent/#comment-17542>)

Helen the only thing that's worked so far is incentives and/or going outside with them!



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Thank you – wish me luck!

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