

Dear parents with school aged children

You might be inclined to create a minute by minute schedule for your kids. You have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments, and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done! But here's the thing..

Our kids are just as scared as we are right now. Our kids not only can hear everything that is going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off of school for 4 weeks sounds awesome, they are probably picturing a fun time like summer break, not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you will see an increase in behaviour issues with your kids. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally - it will happen. You'll see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behaviour in the coming weeks. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What kids need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be ok. And that might mean that you tear up your perfect schedule and love on your kids a bit more. Play outside and go on walks. Bake cookies and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single kid is in this boat and they all will be ok. When we are back in the classroom, we will all course correct and meet them where they are. Teachers are experts at this! Don't pick fights with your kids because they don't want to do math. Don't scream at your kids for not following the schedule. Don't mandate 2 hours of learning time if they are resisting it.

If I can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of all of this, your kids' mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those 4 weeks is long gone. So keep that in mind, every single day.

Stay safe. X

My advice for any parents wanting to homeschool during the school shut down - don't. It's going to be stressful. If things get worse you're going to be stressed, your kids are going to be stressed. You kids might be scared of things they've heard or seen on TV. Arguing with your kids to do work is not what anyone needs right now. Instead, cuddle up together and read, read, read. Take turns reading. Read them your favourite novel (yes, you can read novels to kindergarten age kids). Do a puzzle. Build a fort. Bake. Watch TV together. Paint. Get out the lego and build together. Set up a tent in your livingroom and camp out.

Look at photos of when you were a kid. In other words. Don't stress about them forgetting. Don't stress about homeschooling them. Just spend time together. Your kids won't learn much if they're feeling stressed. Though this is a scary time, it could very well be a time they remember as the best time in their life.