

Tips for Parents Part 1

How to stay positive and make home schooling work for you...

1. Establish a routine quickly.

I think it's important to have a routine and try to stick to it as much as possible. Don't make excuses. The better you model this, the more likely you child will follow suit.

You might decide to start with learning tasks straight after breakfast, 9-12 for example. Followed by lunch and then outdoor and/or engaging mindfulness activities as a family if possible.

Allocate gadget/screen time clearly. There's tons of advice out there regarding this. I think this is going to be one of the hardest things for parents/carers to implement and manage. My advice to parents has always been set clear limitations but it's always a good idea to give your child some control over when they use the hours or what they play (within reason). I can't emphasize enough how much gaming can affect your child in school - playing inappropriate games shows negative behaviours in your child.

2. Think Positively!

This is not meant to sound patronising. I know the power of thinking positively, having to face a serious health condition. Years ago, I got into a spiral of thinking negatively, assuming the worst or that bad things are likely to happen. I catastrophised a lot and suffered with anxiety at times. I did a lot of reading and research, alongside accepting counselling and life coaching. This dramatically changed my life; so much so that when I had to face cancer, I dealt with it, and am still dealing with it. It's as though a switch has gone off in my head and I am able to see the positives. If you struggle with this, I recommend you seek support and read 'The Art of Being Brilliant' by Andy Cope.

So, start every day with "What's going well?" Even if it's that you've managed to find a matching pair of socks... Celebrate it!

End each day together with your family asking, "What went well today?"

Focus on the good things. All too often I encountered parents/carers who would meet their child on the school gate at the end of the day with

the question, "Did you have any problems today? Did THAT child cause you any issues today?" This would lead to the child focusing on what may have been a tiny isolated incident that was dealt with; the rest of the day was amazing but the parent/carer never got to hear about that because their child knew that in order to get their parent's attention, they needed to focus on problems.

3. Make the most of everyday. Live in the present.

All too often many of us are 'Destination Addicts'. We look to the future too much and over think about things we want to be, how we want to look, what we would like to do. Try to focus more on the present. The here and now. Are you actually 'present'? Do you listen to your family carefully? Do you really give them quality time? How good a listener are you?

4. Establish respectful rules.

Take care - if you find yourself getting angry or impatient, check yourself. If you find you are shouting, raising your voice or getting too emotional with your child, walk away and take 5.

It's always worth writing a contract for the whole family which lays out some rules such as how we speak and treat one another because things are going to get stressful at times. Bear in mind that your children DO copy you so you have to model it too. Some of my favourites are:

We talk kindly to one another.

We use calm voices.

We walk away and take 5 if we feel angry or feel like shouting. (We do not shout).

We listen carefully to one another.

You might want another contract which lays out the routines. Think about rewards for following the routines and or contracts. Get the whole family to sign up to it.

5. Keep a sense of humour.

Have fun and laugh. If things are getting tense, put on a good song. I have often recommended to parents/carers with children who pose challenges to use music and dance to turn the atmosphere around.

6. Manage behaviour challenges calmly.

Use tactical ignoring wherever possible and give attention to your child when they are following the contract rules. Remind them in a calm voice that you will listen or help when they are calm. Move to another room wherever possible and look extremely thoughtful and busy! Use distraction as a tool and speak aloud to yourself. "Right, I must finish this. Now where did I put the..." I perfected this in my head teacher's office and that was just for dealing with the staff!

Good luck.

Please comment on the FB page if there is anything you might want help with or more details on a topic.