

TIPS FOR DISTANT LEARNING & MENTAL WELLBEING

While some schools are returning to in-person classes, or have already done so, others are staying online. If your child is still doing school virtually, consider some of the tips below to continue helping them be successful in their studies, while also maintaining their overall wellbeing.

Consistency

Support your kids to build a routine by encouraging them to set an alarm at the same time each day (for in-person school days and virtual days if doing mixed classes). This could include using an agenda and carving out time to eat a healthy breakfast, make their bed, and keep up with good hygiene, such as brushing their teeth, before they start their virtual school day.



Create a Comfortable Learning Environment in Your Home Space

Encourage your kids to sit at a desk or table, instead of their bed, during class time. You can remind them to keep their bed for sleep and their workspace for schoolwork, as this will help in preventing napping and sleepless nights by mixing these two areas. When kids take breaks throughout their workdays, you can remind them that these should be an opportunity to get fresh air and have a healthy snack to give their brain a power-up to finish the school day!



Screen-Time

Help reduce your kid's screen time during and between classes. Just like you wouldn't be permitted to be on your phone in meetings and during work, try to help your kids respect this rule when learning at home. You could even try this during your workload! To eliminate distractions, your kids can log out of distractions like TikTok, Instagram and Netflix and avoid video games during class time. If your child has difficulty staying focused and needs stimulation, you can try purchasing some fidget tools.



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Managing Time for Homework and Assignments

Stay on top of school assignments by encouraging kids to dedicate time in their schedules for homework and assignments. It is also helpful if they work on the assigned work, rather than working on assignments for alternate courses, during class time. This will take their attention away from the current content being presented and may lead to them falling behind. Organization of school materials is also key and organizing binders or folders for online subjects, just as they would in person, can help keep a level of control for kids over their environment and workload.



Support Opportunities for Social Interaction

Just like they would spend time with peers during lunchtime or after school, encouraging time for social interaction (i.e., through a Zoom call or other online games) is a great way to split up the day to avoid overworking. When appropriate, these social activities could be done together, from a safe distance, outside. However, for the time being, avoid the risks of exposure and help your child set up times for virtual catch-ups and social bonding.



Encourage Engagement in Activities or Building Mastery in a New Skill

Help your kid find some virtual clubs or teams to join and engage in safe activities as an opportunity to socialize and have fun! Help them discover new skills like sketching, painting, coding, baking, knitting, or any other activities that can be practiced from home. Other activities could include exercise (i.e., 20-minute Yoga, a walk outside, stretching) or volunteering (either distanced or virtually).



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Family/Bubble Time

Spending time with family is an important part of caring for yourself and others in your home. During mealtimes, you can engage in check-ins with your child about a variety of topics including school, friends and how they're feeling. Having family check-ins with your loved ones can be a part of your structure and routine, and help with swapping distractions (i.e., social media) for productive and meaningful family time together.



Self-Care

Help your kids make time to relax and re-energize for more demanding tasks in their day. You can accomplish this by helping them to schedule self-care time into their routine. Some ideas could include taking a bath, reading a book, doing an at-home workout, listening to music, or watching a show or movie they like alone, with yourself, and/or other family members in the house or online.



Feeling Overwhelmed?

If you feel your child might be struggling with different aspects of online learning or a lack of in-person experiences, help them in connecting with guidance counsellors and/or teachers for support and accommodations. If you feel they may need mental health support, investigate some of the psychology and counselling services near you, and encourage your child(ren) to communicate their concerns with you without judgement. By going to the the Government of Ontario site and searching for mental health support, you can help you find resources for children, youth, adults and Indigenous people. In case of an emergency, contact 9-1-1 or go to your nearest Emergency Department.



Hopefully, some of these tips were helpful, and you can continue to stay healthy and safe as we all continue to work together while apart!