

## Navigating the “New Normal”



Everyday life at work and school provides the structure, support and accountability that we need to move forward in our productivity and learning goals. During this time of pandemic-related disruption, many parents are now working from home and supervising children learning at home. And they are doing this within a “new normal” where their working and learning environment that normally provides structure, support and accountability has been turned upside down.

As an ACSI ministry partner who specializes in employee well-being, I've spoken with many parents in the past few weeks regarding this issue. In talking with parents, I'm hearing that the biggest problematic issue they are facing is *not* related to the rigor of their children's schoolwork. Rather, their greatest difficulty is in creating and sustaining family routines that help everyone to stay on task.

**As we adjust to the next month of managing a “new normal” regarding work productivity and schoolwork at home, good routines and good communication are essential.**

### **Good Routines:**

Most of the parents I have spoken with report that they are struggling to get their children to shift away from a “snow day” or “spring break” mentality. They also realize that their children are struggling to understand and process what it means to live in the middle of a world-wide pandemic. For these reasons, they find enforcing the usual routines and boundaries to be difficult.

During this time, it is important to maintain some family structure with consistent:

**Wake times** for each family member

**Mealtimes** with specific tasks assigned to each child

**Quiet time** hours when work and school assignments will be completed.

**Play time** hours when family members get out of the house and move their bodies

**Bedtimes** for each family member

## **Good Communication:**

Circumstances and people are often unpredictable, so along with good routines, consistent communication is also important! Gathering the family once a day to have each person report on the 5 questions that can help families go from mere survival to a sustainable “new normal.”

## **5 Questions:**

1. In addition to our family routine, what is on your **schedule** for today? What scheduled events or meetings will require your undivided attention and full participation?
2. What are the top two or three tasks that you must accomplish in order to call this day a **success**?
3. What is one specific thing that our family can do today to **support** you as you do your work?
4. What is your **strength** and how will you use it to help share the load today? What specific thing will you do today that will help our family work well together during this time?
5. How will you **seize** the day? How will you make the most of the opportunities that exist within our “new normal?”

Navigating this “new normal” is not easy especially since, at this time, there is no clearly defined endpoint. But opportunities exist within every circumstance in life, including living in the middle of a pandemic. By focusing on good routines and good communication, families can continue to grow in their productivity, learning and well-being and, perhaps, grow in their connection with each other as they learn to work together as a team.