

Being Your Children's Teacher

This is the most uncertain of times for us! Shops closed, families divided, week after week of lock-down; each day we see the number of cases increase and tragically families losing their loved ones.

And during lock-down there are many families struggling in different ways – financially, emotionally, missing extended families and friends.

Juggling home-schooling while working at home can cause frustrations to rise, tempers to fray, tears and tantrums.

I am in no way trying to make light of any of these situations, but I ask you to take a moment to consider this perspective.

One of my favourite quotes is from Wayne Dyer

“Change the way you look at things and the things you look at will change”

IT'S NOT SCHOOL!

I am by no means saying don't home educate your children! With a teaching background I know the importance of keeping up the practice at home, but what is important is not to set yourself up to fail before you begin. You cannot possibly recreate the experience and learning of school within your homes. Accept that when schools finally re-open they will adapt and adjust, and both the children and teachers will rise to the challenge of getting back on track. If you're feeling you're not doing it well enough, then let go of the inner stress and know that doing your best is good enough.

Take the pressure off yourself and focus on how you can really make the best use of this time. Although we would never wish this situation on ourselves and the world, we find that we are in this place so let's make the best use of it. We are at home, not for a weekend or a few days but for many days. How many times after this will you have the chance to spend so much time off work with your children? Probably never! So instead of feeling frustrated and negative, change the way you look at it.

RECOGNISING THE WAY YOUR CHILDREN FEEL

Remember that just as this situation is causing us to have a host of differing emotions which can be difficult to handle, it's important to recognise that your children and teenagers will too be experiencing different emotions. They will be missing their friends, teachers, school life and routines, hobbies, clubs and life as they know it. Depending on their age, they may be aware of the current situation, which can cause feelings of anxiety and being out of control.

Noticing how they are from day to day and helping them to recognise their feelings along with positive ways to deal with these emotions will not only support them now but give them the self-care skills they will need once they are back in school.

TEACHING THOSE LIFE SKILLS

While schools try their very best to provide a balanced education, the pressure is always to focus on academic progress. This is the perfect time to share and teach your children skills for life.

See the benefits of the slower pace of life and take the time to share daily routines with your children. Get out the recipe books or 'google' recipes, make shopping lists, chop vegetables, learn how to turn the oven on, prepare food, cook together, wash the pots. Set up a shop in the kitchen and see how much it costs.

Cut the grass, pull out weeds, plant seeds, water them, keep a check of how they grow; feed and watch the birds.

Collect items from around the house, build a frame, hammer in nails (not to anything important!), make a den, make a picnic, have a picnic in the den, plan a treasure hunt, write clues, work in teams, celebrate the winner.

Set them challenges, allow them to problem-solve, let them fail, teach them to try again.

Let your children entertain themselves, switch off the television, X-box, i-pad, mobile phone for a while, and let them 'play' and use their imagination.

Create, invent, paint, draw, knit, sew, thread a needle, read books, make up stories, be silly, play board games, learn magic tricks, sing, dance...

You are giving your children the most amazing opportunity to try new things, learn new skills, discover what they like and don't like, find new interests, some they will forget in time but other things will stay with them for a lifetime.

BE THEIR ROLE-MODEL

Learn with your children, show them that adults don't know everything. Openly fail at times, let them see it's okay to make mistakes (my children will tell the story of the little rock buns I served as my first attempt of Yorkshire puddings and how I practiced each Sunday until I mastered it) and how to learn from those mistakes and try and try again.

A growing amount of research that proves that resilience is one of the most important influences in our success in life. Lessons in resilience will help your children immensely in their learning once they return to school and in their future lives.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

When we think of the values we wish our children to have, I am sure you will agree that respect, empathy, and kindness are important. This is the perfect time to demonstrate these to your children as we watch our 'key workers' selflessly supporting us during this time. As NHS staff, carers, refuse collectors, supermarket staff, volunteers...all demonstrate kindness (and bravery) every day to every one of us, talk to your children about how we all can make a difference. The lessons of today will nurture these values and children will grow up to respect the diversity of our society and show empathy and kindness.

CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THINGS

So my wish is that in 20, 30, 40 years from now, our children will be telling their children and grandchildren about this time and will remember all the lessons we taught them (yes, the 'school lessons' but more importantly the life lessons), the memories we made, the laughter we shared and the value of family.