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Staying on track with your personal health while staying at home

As we all know, America, and the world, is facing an unprecedented situation right now. Many people are working from home or out of work completely, and schools across the country are closed, some for the rest of this academic year. This means that parents and students are experiencing a time that they likely haven't before, in which the whole family is home together all day, every day.

This time can't be seen as a vacation though. Work still has to be done, students still have to learn, and routines and structures still have to be in place.

But how?

According to Sandy Tweedy, an eighth-grade language arts teacher at Bednarcik Junior High School in Aurora, Ill., her school district has asked its teachers to prepare lessons for "distance learning." This means that teachers are expected to be available to their students and parents via email multiple times per day to answer questions and offer help.

As far as the classwork, which is all being done through programs, such as Google Classroom, on the students' own time, Tweedy is hopeful in her students' abilities to manage their own routines for getting work done. Tweedy says that she posted a two-day lesson plan on the first day of this distance learning, and already had students submitting work by the end of that day.

"The fact that students are completing these assignments on their own says a lot about their character," Tweedy says. "They are holding themselves accountable for their learning during this unprecedented time."

Parents of younger students, however, are having to get even more creative with their children, and play the part of "teacher" more than ever.

Alex Hughart's older two children are in 1st grade and preschool. She says, "Teachers from not only their main classroom, but also their gym, art, music, and library teachers send information, worksheets, and free resources to continue their education at home."

"I did create a daily schedule for them to follow with lots of breaks, as well as time to get up and moving and stretch out," Hughart says. "I feel like having the schedule helps them to remember that they have something to look forward to."

Although Hughart is trying to stick to a schedule, waking her children up at their usual time every morning, having meals at the same times, and creating a work-time schedule, she says that there is also room for adjustments in this.

"The past two days have had nice weather in the morning, so instead of starting with reading like we originally intended, we have started with outdoor activities and getting our bodies moving, and learning what we can in nature," Hughart explains. "I feel like this also helps them to continue going on with their day because they started with fresh air and something that felt fun, as opposed to starting with a worksheet."

Hughart is also trying to keep her children engaged and productive through as much hands-on learning as possible, such as doing chores, and helping with cooking and baking. She has even set aside time for them to work on yoga and meditation. Aside from keeping herself and her students on track with schoolwork, Tweedy is also devising plans to keep her family on their own routine.

"I think it is critical to establish a daily routine that creates a balance between academic time, physical activity, alone/mental health time, screen time, and fun," Tweedy explains.

As part of a family that enjoys a lot of athletics and physical activity, Tweedy explains that she plans on keeping her family motivated by using their home gym, going for walks, and utilizing things like Wii Sports. While finding a routine that works for all of us is important, it is also critical at this time that we all remember to stick together.

"We don't often get in a family game night anymore because we are so busy with homework, and after school and evening activities," Tweedy says. "[This week] we had our first family game night in a long time, which was filled with lots of laughter. Truly, something we needed!"

If you are experiencing difficulty communicating health and wellbeing topics simply struggling to get started contact Jeff Mercer with Community Health Magazine at: Jeff@communityhealthmagazine.com 412-596-3727

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