

Routines During “The For-Now Normal”

Daily routines have changed for many families because of steps taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Your children are likely staying home instead of going to school or daycare, and it can be easy (and understandable) for everyone to feel overwhelmed. Taking things one day at a time is okay.

Children and grown-ups thrive on predictable routines, even if they’re just “for now.” Together, write up a daily schedule (giving children some choices when possible) and post it where everyone can see. Remind children that they are an important part of the family team, and include some age-appropriate responsibilities such as picking up toys, feeding pets, or helping you sort laundry.

Keeping Old Routines

There’s always comfort in the familiar, so try to stick to some old routines. Keep bedtime the same if at all possible, maybe choosing one lullaby or story they can look forward to every night, which can give children a sense of control.

Creating New Routines

At the same time, so much is different—it’s a great time to create new routines to help everyone feel more connected and comforted. Any bit of normalcy helps! Together, plan a new family tradition or ritual, such as:

- Preparing a special meal or snack together on a certain night (children might make placemats). Mealtimes can be full of learning moments.
- Having breakfast in a blanket fort together, or lunch on a picnic blanket on the floor.
- Going around the dinner table and talking about one thing you’re thankful for or one good thing that happened that day.
- Playing a card or board game together every night.
- Keeping up storytime, with a twist. Now is a great time to make up silly stories: humor and fun help bring down everyone’s anxiety level.
- Looking at the moon every night or counting the stars before bed.
- Sharing some extra quiet time at bedtime. Hug, reflect on the day, and say something like “I was proud of you when...”

It’s okay if your new routines don’t go as planned. If you don’t get to the activity you had planned for the morning, try it in the afternoon—or the next day, or the day after that. Don’t put pressure on yourself to get everything done—remember, children are resilient and so are you.

