

Draw Strength From Family Routines During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Reliable routines can be important tools to help children learn to manage day-to-day life. But in uncertain times like the current **coronavirus disease 2019** pandemic, having reliable routines is even more important to help both children and adults handle daily challenges and continue to thrive. Here are tips to consider as you navigate your military family's routine.

Maintain aspects of your normal routine

With children out of school and many parents **working from home**, it may be hard to tell what normal life looks like these days. In the midst of all the change and uncertainty, maintaining basic routines can help life feel more normal.

- **Remind yourself that your child probably looks forward to certain routines** and relies on them for a feeling of security. That may include evening baths, calling out-of-town loved ones and reading together at bedtime.
- **Let babies and toddlers nap at their normal times.** If you are a parent unaccustomed to being home with your young children, try to organize your work around their sleeping schedules.
- **Keep school-age children on a normal weekday schedule** as much as possible, so they don't have trouble readjusting when they do return to school. Stick to regular times for waking up and going to bed and having meals, snacks and playtime.
- **Have children do any required homework during normal school hours**, and save screen and playtime for after they've finished assignments.
- **Maintain normal family routines** such as eating together and sharing other evening activities.
- **Keep your routines simple.** The more complex the routine, the harder it is to maintain.
- **Make time for yourself and your relationship.** The current situation can be incredibly challenging. Here are ideas for **keeping your relationship strong** and **communicating as a couple**.

Create new routines

Although it is important to keep basic routines in place, this can also be a time to come up with creative ideas to help everyone handle being at home. Here are some ideas:

- **Create a daily schedule for each child** with hourly activities, and post it somewhere visible like the refrigerator. Make sure to include scheduled family activities.
- **Engage children in household chores.** Toddlers can clean up their toys. Older children can set and clear the table for meals. Teens can be responsible for taking care of younger siblings. Everyone can help fold laundry and plan and prepare meals.
- **Encourage tweens and teens to reach out to their friends.** Challenge them to **learn about the virus**, or research positive things that have resulted around the world from people staying inside. They could also suggest creative ideas for socializing from a safe distance.
- **Work together as a team.** Include the whole family in brainstorming ideas for managing chores and planning activities, and try to keep things as positive as possible. Make a list of fun things to do, post it where everyone can add to it, and decide what to add to your daily schedules. For more ideas, check out resources from the **Morale, Welfare and Recreation Digital Library**.
- **Be flexible.** It might be helpful to let go of some of your normal expectations for family life. For instance, if you don't usually allow screen time on school nights, you might allow exceptions as long as everyone understands that the rules return once life returns to normal.

These are challenging times, but having a plan and working together can help you manage. Understanding of COVID-19 is rapidly changing. For updates and information specific to your location, visit your installation's official website. You can also follow your installation's Facebook, Twitter or Instagram platforms.

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