

“Conscious Disciple for School and Working from Home” by Becky Bailey

1. Get on a schedule.

The brain thrives on predictable patterns, but so much in our lives is unpredictable right now! If your daily routine is also unpredictable, your child’s brain will spend its energy scanning the environment looking for patterns (safety) rather than devoting that energy to problem solving, creativity or learning. It’s helpful for children to know that life is going to be different, and that you will find a new normal together. A predictable daily pattern helps do just that.

Stop and Go Door Signs are a helpful tool for parents who are working from home.

2. Create a home learning routine.

Decide how long your learning sessions will last. The younger the child, the shorter the timeframe. If your child is older and will be working for more than two hours, break your “school day” into two or more sessions with at least a one-hour break for outdoor play or free time between sessions. It’s helpful to provide a visual timer for children to track their progress through the routine.

Including a Brain Break in your routine will help children maintain focus and increase their attention span.

A Brain Break is a movement activity that gets the blood flowing. Simply standing up delivers 15% more oxygen to the brain! Ideally, brain breaks also include a bit of connection (eye contact and touch) with another family member. Your home learning routine needs a three-minute brain break every 15-20 minutes in order to help maintain focus and keep your child’s brain running optimally!

3. Provide opportunities for success.

The new home learning situation and worldwide climate of uncertainty create huge roadblocks to an optimal learning state. A child who has experienced success has a brain that’s better prepped for learning. Cultivate success first, and then move to more challenging material.

4. Pivot to a new point of view.

When frustrated over academic content or children’s behavior, one strategy that can help is pivoting. When we pivot, we consciously shift from what we don’t want, to what we do want.

We can pivot internally for ourselves from “I’m going to lose my mind,” to “I’m going to step away and take three deep breaths,” and from, “This second step is impossible,” to, “I’m going to get more information so this makes sense.”

We can verbally pivot with children from, “Stop interrupting me,” to, “Be quiet while I finish explaining,” from, “Stop hiding under the table,” to, “Come sit in your seat,” and from, “Stop SCREAMING!” to, “Use a quiet inside voice like mine.”

With pivoting, the goal is to seek out and focus on a positive action. If we can pivot our minds away from what’s wrong long enough to verbalize what we would like to see, we brighten our outlook.

5. Hit the pause button.

Children are under stress right now (just like us), so don’t hesitate to hit the pause button at any point if things aren’t going “as planned.” When stressed, the brain shifts to the lower reactionary centers and can’t access higher order thinking skills like problem solving and learning.

If your children are throwing fits, pulling out their hair and regressing due to stress, their brains can’t absorb information. Pull back and focus on the basics: Safety and connection. If children are acting squirrely during a lesson (fidgety, falling out of their chairs, staring into space, etc.), try an extended brain break to get their minds back in the game.