



## **A Daily Plan Emphasizing Executive Functioning While School Is Closed Due To COVID-19.**

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The impact of COVID-19 has caused changes in daily routines and plans in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. One such change is the closing of schools resulting in online instruction for students. Teachers are tapping into their creativity to provide students with the instructional content and skills that would normally be provided in the classroom setting.

We would like to support parents with some strategies that enhance learning and address executive function skill training. Note that we have highlighted the predominant EF addressed in selected bullets.

### **A Suggested Daily Routine Including Attention to Executive Functioning**

1. Develop a daily schedule with your child that includes a set wake-up time, mealtimes, school instructional time, chore time, play times and breaks, and a set bedtime. Such a schedule provides the structure and **sequencing** that is a vital component of the school day.
2. Let's look at some executive function (EF) strategies that you can use with your child to enhance the components of the daily schedule you have developed with your child.
  - **Set Wake-up Time and Early Morning Activity Plan**
    - Agree on a wake up time with your child as close to possible to the same time your child would have if attending school.
    - Identify and make a **checklist** of the activities your child would normally complete in order to prepare for school (wash, brush teeth, dress, eat breakfast, complete any morning chores, TV/game time, etc.).
    - Have your child prioritize the list in terms of each activity's importance by numbering each item with the number 1 being the most important, the number 2 being the second most important, and so on.
    - Next, have your child **estimate** how much time it will take to complete each task. **Use a timer – such as Time Timer**, kitchen timer or phone to see if their estimations allowed enough time, too much time, or too little time to complete the task on the **checklist (time management)**.
    - The next step would be to adjust the plan for the estimated amount of time needed of the completion of each task. (**checklist strategy, planning, time management, prioritizing, cognitive flexibility/shifting**).
    - The final step would be to implement (**initiating**) this morning plan keeping some flexibility in mind.

- **Mealtime Plan**
  - Keep the same mealtimes that your child would have if physically attending school taking into account a possible change in breakfast time. You will be adding lunch, so involve your child in preparation of all meals, especially lunch.
  - A checklist (**communication, self-regulation, sequencing**) is especially helpful as you assign duties to your child. Especially, if you are working from home, give the child age appropriate duties to help prepare the lunch. Young children may be able to wash their hands and set the table with paper ware prior to your entry to lunch time.
  
- **Instructional Time Plan**
  - If your child's school has sent work for the student to complete, divide it into Morning Work and Afternoon Work. Backward Map a plan (**planning**) for completing assignments.
  - Establish a designed space (**organization**) in your home for your child to work on schoolwork. Provide a checklist or visuals (**communication**) of what assignments need to be completed during the session.
  - Make certain the student understands (**communication, working memory, initiating and focusing**) what to do before leaving him or her to complete it.
  - Have a means for the student to request help (**plan for communication**) either during instructional time or later. If your school is not providing work, please, see the resources we have listed on our website.
  - Check our frequently updated website for strategies and lessons you can adapt for your child.
  
- **Chore Time Plan**
  - Most chores on the schedule (**communication, working memory, time management**) should be the same as those the child usually completes before or after school. If you are adding chores, please, make certain the student understands (communication) exactly what is expected of him or her.
  
- **Play Time and Breaks Plan**
  - During the typical school day, students have break, and this time should be no different. Be specific about screen time (**communication**) so there are no misunderstandings.
  
- **Bedtime Plan**
  - Debrief with the student to determine how the day went and whether there needs to be a change in tomorrow's schedule. (**planning, cognitive flexibility/shifting**).
  - Manage bedtime as you would for a school day; however, if the child procrastinates going to bed, negotiate the extra time that the child may stay up and set a timer at which time there is no more negotiation.

Taken in part from Strosnider, R. & Sharpe, V. (2019). *The executive function guidebook: Strategies to help all students achieve success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.