



Coronavirus and the Workforce: Working From Home With No Childcare

Working from home with kids is possible — but parents will need a plan and support from their employers.



 [Nicole Roder](#) on Mar 24, 2020

[CORONAVIRUS](#)

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Ideas for managing a work-from-home situation while child care is unavailable — and how employers can be supportive

Today is day 3 for me of being home all day with my entire family due to the COVID-19-related shutdowns. I have 1 husband, 4 kids, and 2 dogs. I also have a job, and so does my husband.

We are fortunate to have jobs we can do from home; all we need is our computers and good WiFi. We realize that there are many workers who don't have this privilege, such as restaurant employees, healthcare workers, emergency responders, and more. So we are doing our best to stay positive.

Still, it is day 3 going on who-knows-how-many of having my work interrupted by the kids complaining that I didn't stock up on blueberry frozen waffles. It's frustrating, to say the least. I know that many of you are experiencing similar conditions. You are attempting to practice good social distancing by working from home, and your kids are home because schools and childcare centers are all closed.

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I've been [working from home](#) while homeschooling 2 of my kids for 3 years now, so I do have some experience here. It is a bit different now that we can't leave the house. But since I have some experience with this issue that many Americans are now facing for the first time in their lives, I'd like to offer some ideas for managing a work-from-home situation while child care is unavailable.

I'm going to look at this issue from 2 perspectives: the worker's and the employer's.

For employees: How to work from home with kids during the [coronavirus](#)

The 2 most important things for making this situation work are structure and flexibility. They may sound like opposing forces, but in this case, they are symbiotic.

Structure

You need a plan. Sit down with your kids and your spouse for a family strategy meeting. Explain to the kids, in age appropriate terms, what is going on and what you need from them.

Let them know that this won't be like a snow day or summer vacation. You will need to work, and they will need to do school work. And though they might not be able to have friends over or go to their favorite indoor play places, you will make an effort to have some fun together each day.

Next, it's time to strategize. Ask the kids for their ideas on what educational activities they can do, how you can fit them into your day, and how they can entertain themselves while you work.

"DOING THIS TOGETHER, WITH INPUTS FROM YOUR LITTLE ONE, IS A GREAT WAY TO GET THEM EXCITED AND INVESTED IN THE SCHEDULE. WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A SCHEDULE AND POST IT IN A VISIBLE SPOT IN YOUR HOME SO THEY CAN FOLLOW ALONG EACH DAY."

Try to make a plan that has time scheduled for each of the following:

- Meals
- Exercise
- Parents' work hours
- Kids' school work
- Play
- Chores
- Screens

If you have school-aged kids or teenagers, they will likely have a lot of ideas for how to work in each of these things. But even preschool kids can contribute.

Stephanie Dua is the cofounder and President of Begin, a company that makes [HOMER education technology](#).

"Doing this together, with inputs from your little one, is a great way to get them excited and invested in the schedule," Dua says. "Work together to create a schedule and post it in a visible spot in your home so they can follow along each day."

Your [daily schedule](#) can be as broad or as detailed as you like. Mine is pretty detailed. Here's what it looks like:



KIDS + WORKING FROM HOME SCHEDULE

Daily Schedule

7 am	Mom wakes up	
8 am – 10 am	Mom works. (Interrupted)	The kids get up, get dressed, make bed, eat breakfast.
10 am	Family walk	Yoga and meditation if it's raining.
11 am – 12 pm	School work	All children will read quietly and complete assignments.
12 pm – 1 pm	Lunch	
1 pm – 4 pm	Mom works	Kids read quietly, draw, or watch TV. At least 30 minutes of educational videos required.
4 pm – 4:30 pm	Chores	Wash dishes, sanitize surfaces, mop, and vacuum.
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Mom cooks dinner	Kids play outside or downstairs.
5:30 pm	Family dinner	
6 pm	Get the kids ready for bed.	Take baths, brush teeth, get in P.J.'s
6:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Mom and dad clean up and prepare for tomorrow.	Kids get extra screen time or play outside.
7:30 – 8 pm	Family quiet time	Prayer, meditation, or quiet reading.
8 pm	Bedtime for kids	

[Work From Home Schedule Editable 30](#)

BLUE REPRESENTS WORKING HOURS

PINK REPRESENTS NON-WORKING HOURS

Blue represents working hours. Pink represents non-working hours.

Download your own Family Schedule Template here:

[60-minute Version](#)

Flexibility

You'll notice that I've only scheduled an hour and a half for school work, but that's a little deceptive. When you homeschool, everything is a learning opportunity, and there's a lot more that "counts" as school work besides our worksheets and reading.

Our family walks and yoga are physical education. Our meditation is health, and even our chores count as health education. When we sanitize our surfaces and wash our hands, we are absolutely discussing the reasons that this helps keep us from contracting the coronavirus.

I USUALLY PLAN ABOUT 5 HOURS A DAY FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES. BUT AT THIS TIME, I HAVE NONE OF THE USUAL SUPPORT THAT MAKES MY WORK DAY EASIER TO MANAGE, AND MY HUSBAND HAS TO WORK FROM HOME TOO.

Even still, this is not how I normally homeschool. I usually plan about 5 hours a day for school activities. But at this time, I have none of the usual support that makes my work day easier to manage, and my husband has to work from home too.

When you and your family make your "Coronavirus Shutdown Plan," you'll need to be flexible enough to structure your work life and home life in ways that you've probably never done before.

Balancing work and school hours

Working hours: If your family has 2 working parents who are working from home, you can realistically do 1 of 2 things. Either 1 parent continues to work full-time and the other cuts back their hours by a lot. Or both can cut back their hours by a little. It will probably be difficult for both of you to maintain a full-time schedule.

If neither of you can afford to cut back on hours, you might want to consider working a few hours at night, while your kids are sleeping.

Homeschooling: It looks like all of our kids are going to be home for an extended period of time. Many states are now saying that the school closures will last for more than the few weeks that were originally planned. That means that your kids will need to learn at home.

Start by communicating with their teachers. Ask if they have any assignments that you can have your children complete. You can also find many free or cheap homeschooling resources online. [Khan Academy](#) is a free website that offers lessons and worksheets in several subjects. If you don't mind spending a little money, [education.com](#) and [teacherspayteachers.com](#) have a lot of worksheets and lesson plans that are affordable and high quality.

There are also a number of educational venues that offer free, virtual field trips. Visit [Yellowstone National Park](#) or the [Smithsonian Museum of Natural History](#) from your computer.

Screen time: Personally, I don't like to let my kids watch more than 30 minutes of TV per day. But these are desperate times. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), for kids age 6 and older, it is perfectly safe to create a screen time schedule that works around your family's needs. Just make sure you don't allow screens to interfere with sleep, exercise, or spending face-to-face time with the family.

So if you are normally opposed to excess screen time, you might have to adjust those expectations for a while.

For employers: How to support your staff while they are [working from home](#)

There's a reason that I addressed the workers first. I wanted you to see just how little time there is in a day for parents to complete a job when they have no child care. Please be cognizant of your employees' new reality, and try to offer support when you can.

Telecommuting and work hours

Allow employees to telecommute if possible. This should really go without saying, but I'll repeat it just to make sure. Public health experts are recommending that people stay home whenever possible. So if your organization does the type of work employees can do from home, now is the time to embrace telecommuting.

longer have to attend in-person meetings. Consider paying your staff their full salary in exchange for completing all assigned tasks, rather than on an hourly basis.

Technology

Take advantage of free technology offers. On March 3, [Google](#) announced that it would make their advanced features available for free to all of their G Suite and G Suite for Education customers. These features will remain free through July 1. This means employers can hold meetings with up to 250 participants, live stream to up to 100,000 viewers, and record and save meetings to Google Drive. In addition, [Microsoft](#) is offering free 6 month trials of a premium tier of Microsoft Teams, which allows businesses to hold video teleconferences.

Leave policies

We understand that businesses are struggling. This virus has caused a major disruption in the world economy, and employers in many industries are hurting. But if it is at all possible, you might want to consider offering your employees emergency leave.

As you can see from my schedule in the section above, I can't possibly put in 8 hours of work and care for my children at home unless I keep working for at least 3 hours after they go to bed. That would have me working until 11 pm every night. I've done that before, when I was on a tight deadline or had an unusual work load, but if I had to do that every day, I'd be exhausted. So would your employees.

If you have any room in your budget for a more generous leave policy, now is the time to offer it.

Contact your representatives

Lobby the government for better economic support. Right now, the White House, Congress, and state governments are considering economic [stimulus](#) bills. Call your representatives and let them know that it's important for these bills to include measures that will help you and your employees maintain your incomes.

Even better, organize other business leaders in your community to do the same. It looks like people might be home from work and school for a long time. Let's do our best to ease the financial burden on both businesses and families.

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Nicole is a freelance writer specializing in health, mental health, and parenting issues. Her work has appeared in Today's Parent, Cruxeo, Grok Nation, Chesapeake Family LIFE, and the Baltimore Sun, among others.

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