



EN PARENT'S INFORMATION: WHEN LEARNING TAKES PLACE AT HOME

Dear Parents,

We all have now two very unusual weeks behind us. Work and childcare had to be reorganized. Our entire life follows completely different rules. Overall, the current situation is challenging not only for us, but for our children as well.

You have received learning materials and tasks from your school. We all know that children learn in **different ways**. Some children learn independently, other children need more support. Pace of learning and interests are also very different.

All of this is fine in class and now also applies to learning at home.

Teachers are aware that the situation does not allow everyone to work with the child for several hours a day. For this reason, we do not only want to give you learning materials, but also an advice: Do only what you and your child can do.

Doing something together like playing or sports, doing handicrafts, baking, experimenting and much more are also good fields of learning and experience. This way you help your child to learn something every day.

The learning subjects will be taken up again, when school restarts. We will begin our work based on where your child stands. So please take the sentence literally: Do only as much as you are able to do with your child! It is important that you all get **well through the next few weeks and stay healthy**.

The experiences of the first days of learning at home have showed that the schools approach to the situation very differently. If you have questions relating to the school subjects or technical difficulties, **please contact your school and pass on your personal experience**. This creates the opportunity for schools take individual needs better into account.

Hereinafter you will find **tips and suggestions** that will help you organize learning at home and family life over the time of schools closure.

HOW TO ORGANIZE LEARNING AT HOME?

Organizing and completing the amount of tasks on your own is certainly not easy. In the following you will find tips on how to support your child doing his homework received from school:

- ▶ **Get an overview:** Take a look at your child's school assignments and plan the week together. It is advisable to combine school's work and domestic tasks in one weekly plan. This prevents misunderstandings and arguments. Depending on the age of your child, he can decide different things by him self (e.g. with what tasks start with or at what time of day he will do his homework). Make sure that your child takes enough breaks.
- ▶ **Clarify expectations:** Explain your child clearly that learning takes place, even when the school is closed. Stand by the school. Show your child that the learning contents are meaningful. **Appreciate** his learning efforts.
- ▶ With a **list of task for every day** of the week (3-5 tasks per day) you can divide the "big mountain" of assignments into small daily sections, making it easy for your child to keep an overview. Crossing out completed tasks is good for your child' motivation.
- ▶ **Organize a calm workspace:** Make sure that your child has his own desk for his schoolwork where he is not distracted. Moving images (e. g. television, computer) and sounds (e. g. radio) are distracting.
- ▶ **Learn how to learn:** if needed, get into an exchange with your child about different learning strategies. Convey your own positive experiences.
- ▶ **Know when to end the day's school work:** your child needs free time, after he has fulfilled his assignments for the day. You do not have to give him extra tasks for practice, rather than space to relax. Children who learn slowly or have concentration difficulties, should have clear time schedules.

HOW CAN I MOTIVATE MY CHILD?

Motivation is crucial for learning. A high level of self-motivation is conducive for the mood, self-esteem and success. It is effective to motivate your child as long as it is not perceived as being imposed. By controlling your child's work too heavily you will not only achieve stress and bad mood, but also lower learning success. Here are some recommendations how to keep your child motivated:

- ▶ **Plan realistic** learning units with your child and let him **participate** by making some decisions
- ▶ **Encourage** your child to try things first by himself. Talk with him about methods to **overcome difficulties independently**.
- ▶ By using digital technology (chat, video calls etc.) your child can **learn with his friends**.
- ▶ **Show interest** in your child's achievements without controlling him too heavily.
- ▶ A **happy atmosphere** helps to stay motivated and in a good mood.

WHEN I HAVE SEVERAL CHILDREN

Parents with several children at home have much more work taking care of all. It might get quite complex for families to help more than one child with his school assignments. Hence, in addition to the previous recommendations, here are some pointers:

- ▶ Align your support to the **different needs** of the children: The younger children or children with special needs usually need more help and it takes a longer until independent learning gets easier. Be patient!
- ▶ If possible, arrange **learning partnerships** with your children, in which, for example, the older children support the younger ones. Appreciate successful cooperation.
- ▶ Give the teacher **feedback** in time if the tasks are too overwhelming or the deadlines can't be met.

HOW TO GIVE THE EVERYDAY LIFE A STRUCTURE?

Due to canceled everyday activities your family life has changed, which is challenging. It is very important to give your days a good structure:

- ▶ Try to keep **daily routines** (e. g. a fixed time to get up) and do not change your family rituals (e. g. breakfast or bedtime rituals)
- ▶ Have some **meals together** – preparing food together can be a nice activity.

- ▶ Gather fun **ideas** for **leisure time** (e. g. painting, doing handicrafts, playing games, making music)
- ▶ Make agreements with your child on the subject of **media consumption**. What games and apps does your child use? Are there alternatives? Limit the media time!
- ▶ Make sure that your child has a **balanced daily routine** with enough physical exercise and contact to "real" people. But recognize the opportunities media can provide during this time, namely as an educational offer and a way to keep in touch with friends.
- ▶ Many **physical activities** can be done in the living room. You will find apps and videos for domestic sports and exercise programs. You might find it helpful to have a fixed time in the day for sports.
- ▶ Set realistic **goals** that are appropriate to the circumstances.

HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICTS?

You see each other now more than usual. Conflicts are easily possible. Which means to keep calm, take a deep breath and then look for solutions together. Here a few useful pointers how to handle conflicts:

- ▶ **Every day is a new start**. Do not be resentful.
- ▶ **Resolve the conflict calmly** – and while you are annoyed.
- ▶ Ask yourself in advance what it is really about you are annoyed or stressed out. Agree on a time frame for a clarifying conversation.
- ▶ Sit together down at a table and, if necessary, write your agreements down.
- ▶ Do not throw in every small conflict in one big argument. Conflicts are about behavior - do not get personal.
- ▶ Speak with your child about your perspectives on the situation. Stay friendly and empathetic.
- ▶ You should both express interests, needs and desires. Name the differences. There is nothing wrong with wanting different things.
- ▶ Look together for solutions and do not give up before you have done so.
- ▶ If the situation is about to escalate, take a break and continue the conversations when everyone has calmed down.
- ▶ Give your child enough time to think about and express its point of view. Silence is not necessarily a bad.

If you and your child notice that the conflicts are escalating and you feel increasingly angry and

helpless, contact a counseling hotline (you will find telephone numbers at the end of the text).

CABIN FEVER – SO WHAT NOW?

When the usual routines and activities are stopped and all family members spend a long time in the apartment, feeling of boredom and monotony can arise eventually. Here are some pointers:

Boredom hides the opportunity to discover old or new skills. Children who get less stimulated for a while, start to implement learned interactions and experiences into new actions. It needs time for this to happen, so you should be a little patient with your child! Children then creatively invent new games and stories or start to experiment with the things they find. In this way, interests and talents can be discovered. And you can discover new sides on your child.

By spending time with him you might even rediscover your **creativity** and joy in playing. Do not forget, that **Humor** helps to develop a delightful atmosphere.

In addition Boredom gives us the opportunity to get lost in our thoughts, to daydream and to be more mindful. **“Boredom is the gateway to our fantasy!”** Children benefit from having more time with their parents at home. Children feel comfortable narrating and playing without being judged.

HOW TO DEAL WITH WORRIES AND ANXIETY?

“Why can't we visit grandma anymore?”

“When can I go to sports again?”

“What will happen, when you stopped working?”

The amount of changes can lead to insecurities by your child. Things that we cannot understand and classify are frightening. There are ways how to react as a parent:

- ▶ **Keep calm:** Children feel their parents anxieties und insecurities. Try to do things, that are good for you and to relax. Speak with your partner or friends about your sorrows, not with your children.
- ▶ **Pay attention:** People, especially children, need a sense of security in order to be able to feel good and to deal well with their feelings. If possible, give more attention to your children when they seem to be overwhelmed by their feelings. Show interest in your child.
- ▶ **Get informed:** Your child has heard a lot about the corona virus in the last few days. Talk about it together. What questions does your child have? Did it include information that is not correct? Keep an eye on your child's media

consumption and gather ideally information together with your child (see links below).

- ▶ **Explain child-friendly:** Give child-friendly and honest answers to the questions they ask. It is enough to explain only the things they really asked about. Especially for younger children it is difficult to understand what a virus is. You may come up with alternative words to explain it, e.g. a disease that is new and our body does not know yet. A vaccine is currently being developed. Many people around the world are currently working on this (see links below).
- ▶ **Take personal responsibility:** Discuss with your child what you can do as a family to protect yourself from the disease. You can practice washing your hands regularly and sneezing or coughing in the crook of your arms. Children enjoy being praised when these things succeed. (Video) phone calls with grandma and grandpa or among friends are also an important contribution to dealing with the situation. You, as a family, can think about how to support other people during this time.
- ▶ **Feeling comfortable:** The best conversations can be held in a calm atmosphere at home. Take time for your child and give him a sense of security. Familiar routines and structure (e.g. family meals, bed time rituals, reading together, playing and cuddles) are helpful for children. It should not be all about the corona virus. A joyful atmosphere is important for learning and comfort.

In the following you will find a selection of media and official sources as well as other options for getting information and advice online or phone consultation.

TIPS FOR PARENTS IN EASY GERMAN:

www.bbk.bund.de/DE/TopThema/TT_2020/Covid-19_Tipps_fuer_Eltern_LS.html

INFORMATION ON THE CORONAVIRUS IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES:

www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/ib-de/amt-und-person/informationen-zum-coronavirus

<https://b-umf.de/p/mehrsprachige-informationen-zum-coronavirus/> (especially for refugees and professionals)

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS, CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS IN THE MEDIA

- ▶ Children's news "logo!" at ZDF: www.zdf.de/kinder/logo
- ▶ Children's channel "KiKa": www.kika.de
- ▶ MDR Knowledge "Wissen": www.mdr.de/wissen/index.html
- ▶ Information at WDR: www1.wdr.de
- ▶ Information at BR: www.br.de/mediathek/rubriken/themenseite-schule-daheim-100
- ▶ Klick-tipps.net: www.klick-tipps.net/coronavirus (recommended by the federal center for child- and youth-friendly media)
- ▶ Child-friendly infovideo about the corona virus: www.meditricks.de/cke

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

- ▶ **Federal Government** Information: www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus
- ▶ **Federal Ministry of Health**: www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus
- ▶ **Robert-Koch-Institut**: www.rki.de (German Public-Health-Institute)
- ▶ **Federal Center for Health Education**: www.infektionsschutz.de
- ▶ **Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief**:
https://www.bbk.bund.de/DE/TopThema/TT_2020/TT_Covid-19.html
- ▶ **Land Saxony-Anhalt** Information: www.sachsen-anhalt.de

COUNSELING SERVICES

- ▶ **Federal Conference on Educational Counseling – Online-Counseling** (anonymous, free of charge):
 - Youth-Counseling: <https://jugend.bke-beratung.de/>
 - Parents-Counseling: <https://eltern.bke-beratung.de/>
- ▶ **Helplines** (anonymous, free of charge):
 - Helpline for children and adolescents: **116 111** (Mon.- Sat. 2- 8 pm)
 - Helpline for parents: **0800 1110 550** (Mon.- Fri. 9-11 am; Tue. & Thu. 5-7 pm)
- ▶ **Psychological Hotline in times of the corona pandemic** (anonymous, free of charge):
 - Association of German Psychologists (BDP): **0800 777 22 44** (Mon.-Sun. 8 am- 8 pm)
- ▶ **School resource system** (free of charge):
 - School social work:
On your schools homepage you can check the availability of these services. Also you can get in touch with the principal or class teacher.
 - Counseling teachers:
www.schulerfolg-sichern.de/fileadmin/user_upload/schulerfolg-sichern/PublicContent/Das_Programm_Schulerfolg_sichern_-_Module/Uebersicht_BLK_2019.pdf
 - Psychological school counseling:
<https://landesschulamt.sachsen-anhalt.de/behoerde/schulpsychologische-beratung/kontakt/>

IMPRINT

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