



Rachel Zwicky

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Tips on Dealing with COVID-19

- Remember that it is normal for kids to regress and/or to develop new behaviors during times of stress. It's not your fault, it's not your child's fault, and your family is NOT alone in dealing with this. My 8 year old became sassy and my 6 year old wants to sleep with me every night.
- Remember to cut yourself some slack, too! Adults are experiencing stress related to health, money, home schooling, routine change, feelings of isolation, and more. It's tough to be super patient when your world's been turned upside down! Again, you are not alone in this. I am a child counselor by trade, and I screamed at my son yesterday! We're all human. As long as you repair your relationship with your child afterwards, no worries. We all make mistakes sometimes. Modeling positive conflict resolution for your child in this way is also powerful and will encourage your kids to admit it and fix it when they mess up.
- At a time that we are now constantly telling our children "no" and it feels like everything is off-limits, our family is choosing to limit power struggles right now.
 - My kids know that doing homework earns them screen time. If they don't do their homework, they don't earn their screen time. They do the work when they're ready. I don't have to nag them, and they get to feel like they have a little more control over their lives. If they need to burn off some energy outside, engage in creative play (how kids tend to work through conflict), or anything else to help get their brain ready to work, I encourage them to do those things.
 - We have only had one day so far that homework did not get done, because my 8 year old wanted to ride his bike for 4 hours straight and also spent hours engaging in therapeutic play (he wore a soldier costume for 2 days straight and pretended to forge an attack against the Coronavirus).
- We are prioritizing connection and self-regulation with some pretty great results. We also started using sticker sheets to reward positive behavior (doing what is asked without arguing, being helpful, being kind, being honest, etc.). In addition to seeing more positive behavior, I have noticed improvements in self-esteem. This also serves as a great distraction from Coronavirus as they take their focus off of everything they can't control and instead focus on something they can control. They seem calmer since we have started doing this.



Above: Rachel Zwicky's sons, Evan (top) and Oliver (middle). Below is Rachel.



(continued)

- Everyone should get some physical activity each day. You may have heard that exercise produces "feel good" chemicals in the brain. Did you know that moving your body also releases built up stress chemicals and helps to keep you out of fight or flight mode? If being active is challenging, you can try gentle stretching or yoga to help ground yourself. Bike rides and Go Noodle are popular choices for physical activity in our house.
- Try to give your full attention to the moment. Can you hear the birds singing? Can you feel your butt on your chair? What's something you can smell right now?
- Try to get outside each day. Simply being in nature is incredibly therapeutic. Did you know that we need the sun to produce vitamin D? Seasonal depression stems from our lack of sunshine in the winter.
- Try to do one thing you enjoy each day. Adequate self-care will make you a better caregiver. You can't give from an empty well. Give yourself permission to replenish yourself. Your kids will notice a positive change.
- Try to stay connected. Humans are social creatures and we are not meant to stay apart! For us, this has been in the form of video chats. I have gotten closer to my favorite aunt (who lives 3.5 hours away), and my kids have gotten closer to their same aged cousin who lives 5 hours away. We have loved having the opportunity to strengthen these relationships when it is otherwise tough to find the time.
- Try to take one day at a time. It can feel overwhelming to think too far ahead when we still don't know what to expect.

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