



DIRECTORATE: INCLUSIVE & SPECIALISED EDUCATION SUPPORT
SPECIALISED SUPPORT SERVICES – 17 APRIL 2020

DISCIPLINING AT HOME DURING COVID-19 SCHOOL LOCKDOWN- Neville G. Goliath

The COVID-19 pandemic forced South African schools to go into emergency lockdown and compelled schooling to continue at home under the supervision and guidance of the primary teacher which is; the parent. Juggling the role of the parent as well as that of the teacher can be difficult for the parent to execute and equally difficult for the child to experience. Effective discipline is important to regulate the emotional distress that the child is experiencing and to guide the appropriate behaviour within a home environment that is safe.



Parents are confronted with an intensified responsibility to oversee the learning of their children in a more formal way. Children must negotiate the home as the new schooling space that requires major adjustment to the body, space and the mind. The parents must overcome their own anxieties to step into the role of teacher with the specialist support through various media platforms. This novel reality can be hard on everyone, especially children. Being home is not a holiday, which is the normal experience of being home from school, but it is the new normal that schooling presents. Suddenly the rules of engagement

is different. The parent needs to differentiate between the role of parent and teacher. The child now has to negotiate new boundaries. The bedroom is the classroom and the backyard the playground. The social group is absent and school timetables are applied at home.

All of these can become emotionally and physically tough and put a strain on both parent and child. Children often give expression to frustration and fears through behaviour. The parent now must deal with the compounded behaviour of their children without the structured school disciplining systems to regulate behaviour and support learning to provide a productive calm. Where does parenting start/stop and teaching start/stop? Unclear rules will make children feel unsafe that could prompt 'misbehaviour' in diverse ways.





How do we create a home that encourages a productive calm?

1. **Address your own emotional needs** by recognizing your own triggers that could influence how kids experience your support. Your anxieties regarding your role as teacher in the home can affect your children's behaviour. **Be honest** with your children and tell them that this situation is new to you and that you would need their help and guidance to get it right. Your emotional well-being and vulnerability is now entrusted to your children. By giving and trusting them with your emotional well-being you give them control of the situation.
2. **Give your children enough control** by setting the ground rules for the programme structure with them. Use the guidelines that the school gave you and set a **daily timetable**. Structure allows the child to predict the flow of the day and what to expect next. This makes them feel safe and regulates emotions and lessens behavioural distress.
3. **Organize the learning and teaching/tutoring space** separate from the home living space. This would simulate the classroom space that requires a different focus and attitude. The space would also support transitioning between learning and recreational activities. Ensure that the learning space is well lit and clean to enable effective learning. Remove clutter and unnecessary scattering of books and papers. Organize it in structured bundles or file it if possible.
4. **Give your children the attention they need.** All kids receive affirmation that everything is ok through attention. This might interfere with your tutoring time. Focus their attention on the presenting task and refer them to the timetable when dedicated time for such attention will be granted. Do not over-react. Simply and calmly divert their attention to the task. But be sure to give them the special attention when the time is right for it.
5. **Call a time-out.** Sometimes diverting is not possible. Negotiate a time-out and give them the choice to comply with the current task or choose to swap out activities on the set timetable. They can choose to have a short break now and complete the task in the set break time. The normal restrictions to privileges still apply as it would in the home.
6. **Appeal to their values.** If misbehaviour is perpetrated then the normal appeal to your child's values system applies. The narrative between parent and child about the rights and the wrongs of their behaviour gets emphasized.
7. **Know when not to respond.** You don't have to respond to everything a child does 'wrong'. An effective way to stop unwanted behaviour can be just to ignore it. Sometimes the **reassuring touch and comforting eye contact** would calm the child to regain focus in the classroom at home.
8. **Catch them being good.** Point out good behaviour, and praise children for their behaviour and successful completion of tasks. Keep the conversation with your children friendly yet firm. Your tone and your facial expressions should match your words. Show them the love and appreciation.
9. **Be kind to yourself.** Getting it wrong is ok. Admit to your child when you are wrong. Children are forgiving. This allows them too to acknowledge their faults. Disciplining your child is a partnership between parent and the child.

“When children misbehave, effective discipline teaches them to regulate their emotions and helps them gain a better understanding of rules and expectations.” Katherine Williamson

SPECIALISED SUPPORT SERVICES

Specialised Support Services are rendered to address barriers to learning and development at schools and to learners who are usually referred via School-based Support Teams (SBSTs). These services may include learning, social work, psychological, therapeutic and behaviour support.

- Facilitating specialised psycho-social-development services (e.g. HIV services and victim-empowerment programmes).
- Managing disaster-relief matters in conjunction with district offices, municipalities and other stakeholders.
- Training staff to provide various developmental social services.
- Ensuring that developmental social services and projects receive the necessary professional and technical support



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