

THE FRIDAY FLIER



KOTAHITANGA

Waikato Waldorf School, Kindergartens and Playcircle

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Kia ora koutou

Well these are very strange times we find ourselves in so we have to find that inner strength and resolve to explore different possibilities to get us through this period, however long it may be!

I am lucky to have various articles sent to me and I thought it may be useful to pass them on to you as you may find something of interest that resonates with you and your circumstances.

The first article comes from Mary Willow whom some of you may remember from her parenting lectures here a few years back. She now has her own business and website supporting parents, whanau, caregivers and teachers and has produced this supportive information.

PARENTING and COVID – 19 (Mary Willow, March 2020.)

How to talk to your children about the virus.

When we understand where children are at DEVELOPMENTALLY, we can be better equipped to know what to say and do.

Young children, from toddlers through to 9-10, are living in a more dreamlike existence. While their bodies are busy becoming orientated and competent in the physical world, their minds are still mixing snippets of reality with dollops of fantasy to form imaginative, placeholder pictures of the world. Just check out their relationship to Father Christmas/Santa and the Tooth Fairy!

During this delicate period they are easily startled and shocked out of this dreamy state. Their fight/flight/freeze/fold centre (amygdala and co.) is always at the ready to secure their safety.

I call this function of the brain 'the Guard Dog'. The purpose of the Guard Dog brain is to protect #1, i.e. ME, ME ONLY and RIGHT NOW! The faster the Guard Dog gets to what it deems to be safe, the better. This is the purpose of all those reactive tantrums, meltdowns, avoidance and freak-outs...to rapidly attempt to regain control over the situation, the parents and others.

The problem is that children do not yet see 'the BIG PICTURE': they are more in a subjective experience rather than seeing an objective reality. They do NOT necessarily know what is best for them or others around them. So when the the Guard Dog is thwarted or threatened it automatically springs into action whether reasonable and needed or not!

But the Guard Dog is not your 'True Child'! It is the emergency brain that is supposed to dominate and protect the early years while the 'roots' of physical growth and development, and secure attachments, are being established. As the child becomes more stable and secure in the world of time, space and people, the Guard Dog can take more of a back seat and the True Child can emerge. We can now see the children going ahead in leaps and bounds with a more objective understanding of themselves and others and a more positive and reasonable response.

Parents and teachers of older children know that the storms of the early years really do diminish, especially with the right guidance, and that on the way, from around 9 or 10 onwards, the children are opening a brand new 'critical eye', as if seeing the realities of life for the first time. This can be exciting or disconcerting and anything in between, depending on each child's 'wiring', temperament and history. The timing of this 'awakening' is unique to each child and just like teething, some will sail through it but for others it may not be smooth sailing.

Although a child may be gaining perspective, their Guard Dog is still present, strong and watching out for the safety of 'me'. It can still hit out, blame everyone else, run for cover or try to control everything, but when the adults around them are both kind, clear and non-reactive, the children can be carried securely through. The storms will come less often and pass more quickly, as the True Child gains both greater clarity AND mastery over their Guard Dog impulsivity.

COVID - 19 is bound to set our own adult Guard Dogs into a myriad of individual responses as well. Our adult Guard Dogs can respond fiercely to calamity, stress, fear and loss just as the children's. This is neurologically normal and essential in real emergencies. However as adults we are able to CHOOSE how to respond, whether and when to act or not. This is the time for us to be careful and wise.

My advice about how to manage thinking about and talking about Covid -19 with the children is very simple and based on this:

IT IS NOT WHAT HAPPENS TO AND AROUND OUR CHILDREN - IT IS WHAT WE, THE ADULTS, DO WITH IT THAT COUNTS.

We can succumb to fear and activate the children's Guard Dog brains (which will harm and regress them) or we can 'up our game' and increase our self-mastery by moving on into the practical here and now.

I once watched a group of parents picking up their children from school immediately after an earthquake. The children of the calm parents were unfazed. The children of the panicky parents were all crying, fearful and even hysterical. It was so clear.

So what to do about Covid? Here's my advice:

BE THE CAPTAINS OF THE SHIP. Get clear about what discussions belong only up on the bridge with those in charge (the parents), or what can be shared with the more senior officers (the older children).

Children under 9-10 are too young to be exposed to the news of the world (the possible storms ahead). Their bodies, emotions and minds are simply asking: what is the world around me here and what are we doing now?

From 10-14 they are the crew. They may need to be given certain information at some point about the lie of the land (the science), the passage ahead (the bigger picture) and the Captain decisions, but it should all be delivered matter-of-factly with the Captain hand firmly at the helm. We can explain in more detail each year as they grow older, but it is not yet time for them to make the decisions on the running of the family ship. 'Yes it's a challenge, yes we are entering stormy waters, but everyone 'to your posts!' and follow commands'.

On deck keep the crew (the kids) in the practical here and now. In simple terms if they have heard something that makes them fearful, listen to them and let them offload (don't over- or under- listen), say kindly that you hear them, validate their feelings as understandable, a quiet hug, a wee chat, but then **MOVE ON**. Keep your eye contact low at these times or you will mutually panic each other. Much better than trying to reason with their fears or talk them out of it, let the anxieties bubble up and blow away, then move the children on into practical activities.

Fear can be expressed in children not just as anxiety but also as avoidance, hyperactivity or a greater urge to angrily control others. Fearful children cannot easily control the overwhelm. The Parents and Captains need to be the boss of their child's fear (their child's Guard Dog). **YOU** decide when the fear doggies are allowed out for a run around (the barking mad offload) and **YOU** decide when the fear is firmly put away (I like to think 'tied up but with a juicy bone of calm, warm and judicious parent empathy') till the next set time for offload. This way you are repeatedly leading their experiential brains from reactive moments to responsive moments. It is this **REPETITION OF POSITIVE ACTION** that processes fear and builds new neural pathways of **RESILIENCE**. It is the body brain that ultimately writes the story. The kids that got out and helped the adults dig the liquefied silt after the earthquake in Christchurch did better than those bogged down in exposure to fearful, emotional adult talk.

The children are simply asking themselves: 'how do the adults deal with this or that?' They are imitating us, both our outer actions **AND** our inner courage and calm in the face of a storm. The ideal parent response is 'we will always find a way.' Repeatedly move it on into the practical...at **ALL** ages. The children are learning by doing. The underlying philosophy needs to be that challenges wake us up, make us more adaptable, bring us together (even if quarantined!). How do we help?

Younger children don't even need to know that there is a world-wide pandemic. They need to know what today is. They don't yet have the ability to put threatening information into perspective. But what if they know already? What if they ask 'will we die?' The truthful answer is that you don't know and the **HELPFUL** answer is (firmly) that 'we will take one day at a time: we will work on the problems and look for the good in every moment and every day'.

This is our greatest parenting task: that no matter what, we will show them how to look for the good in every person, place and situation. And when 'sh*t happens'...we will deal with it with calm captaining, holding the ship steady, navigating the way step by step, with courage and love.

IT IS NOT WHAT HAPPENS TO AND AROUND OUR CHILDREN - IT IS WHAT WE, THE ADULTS, DO WITH IT THAT COUNTS.

Will we take this opportunity to hardwire our kids for calm, practical, positive response? Or will we hardwire them for fear? (which by the way is the foundation of hate) Our children have come to complete **OUR OWN** growing up. They are saying to us: 'transform yourself for the sake of me'. Will we panic or will we allow this situation to grow clarity in our thinking, courage in our hearts and calm in our response to humanity?

Mary Willow, March 2020.

<https://www.plumparenting.com/>

MAHATMA GANDHI

The enemy is fear. We think it is hate, but it is fear.

MICHAEL LEUNIG

There are only two feelings. Love and fear
There are only two languages. Love and fear
There are only two activities. Love and fear
There are only two motives, two procedures,
two frameworks, two results. Love and fear
Love and fear.

6 strategies to juggle work and young kids at home: it's about flexibility and boundaries



Surviving lockdown once schools closes

It's hard enough juggling a job with parenthood when you've got young kids. But what do you do when social-distancing policies mean you've all been sent home?

This is the reality many families now face. Schools have been shut in New Zealand, Britain, France, Germany, South Korea and all but five US states. In Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory are closing schools this week, with more states likely to follow.

To entertain and home school your children while working from home is going to take self-awareness, planning, communication and technology to stop the boundaries between the work and family from fraying and ripping.

Here are six strategies to survive:

1. Be flexible

Working parents often develop routines around work (8am-4pm) and family time (4pm-8pm). Even if you prefer to stick to your routine and keep work to regular work hours, you may need to re-evaluate. The new normal is likely to involve combining greater flexibility with plans and schedules for non-standard working and family time.

To plan successfully, it is critical your know your own style and work preferences. [Research shows](#) some people are "integrators", who cope well with multitasking and switching between work and personal tasks, while "segmenters" prefer to keep things separate and have strong boundaries.

2. Make a plan

Make a daily work and childcare schedule that you, your partner and (to a large extent) your kids agree on. It is crucial to schedule things as it gives you a realistic understanding of what is possible and what you may have to give up versus what you need to claim as essential.

Here is my personal schedule for my partner and I working from home with our six-year-old daughter.

A Marathon Schedule Example: Adjust activities, breaks and transitions to suit your personal, work and family needs.			Tag-Team Dual-Earner Parenting: For balance swap roles every other day	
Schedule for Young Kids			Working Adult 1	Working Adult 2
Before 9:00 AM	Wake up!	Make your bed, eat breakfast, brush teeth, get dressed	Set the stage for the day	
9:00-10:00	Outdoor Time	Family walk or outdoor play	1 hour with kids	Work: 2 hrs. block
10:00-11:00	Academic Time	No Electronics! Reading, homework, study, puzzles, journal	Work: 2 hrs. block	
11:00-12:00	Creative Time	Creative play, drawing, Legos, crafts, music, cooking, baking		1 hour with kids
12:00-12:30	LUNCH		Shared Workload: Cooking time and lunch break	
12:30-1:00	Home Chores	Clean rooms, put away toys, take out garbage, pet care	Shared Workload: Home Duties	
1:00-2:30	Quiet Time	Reading, nap, puzzles, yoga	1 hour of work	Work: 2 hrs. block
2:30-4:00	Academic Time	Electronics OK! Educational games, online activities, virtual museum tours	1 hour with kids	
4:00-5:00	Outdoor time	Family walk or outdoor play	1 hour of work	1 hour with kids
5:00-6:00	Dinner time	Family dinner, help with clean-up and dishes	Shared Workload: Cooking time and lunch break	
6:00-7:00	Bath time	Bath or shower	1 hour with kids	1 hour of work
7:00-8:00	Reading/TV time	Relaxing before bedtime	1 hour of work	1 hour with kids
9:00 PM	Bedtime	Put on PJs, brush teeth, clothes in laundry	Shared Workload: Bed time, cleaning and re-evaluating tomorrow's plans	
9:00-10:00 PM	FLEXIBILITY- a two hour window: Some may want to work after kids go to bed or before they wake up. But do not forget to take breaks and give yourself that leisure time to connect with you friends and to relax on your own. Tag-team parenting and working could mean couples spend less time with each other.		1 hour of work or time to unwind?	
10:00-11:00 PM			Child-free couple time to relax OR Zoom hangout with friends !	
11:00PM - 7:00AM	SLEEP TIME - 8 hours is what helps to keep your stress levels low and your immunity up!			

It's a manic schedule and we are trying to adapt it each day to make it work. But to have it in the first place made us realise how to share home duties and educational responsibilities while carving out work and personal time.

Have a family meeting and lay down what you think is critical for the health of your family and for your productivity at work. Use that understanding to identify workload-sharing plans.



Try different scheduling for a week and meet as a family to discuss what does not work and what could work. For example, try a two-hour work block for two days and see how your partner and kids react to it. Or swap activity times or roles twice a week or every other day.

Once you have a plan, it is critical to communicate the same with colleagues in a way that ensures they are supportive and can work with your constraints and capabilities. Be genuine about your struggles and ask others at work about how they manage their schedules. They will be able to empathise and appreciate you being upfront.

A separate work space can help you mentally separate roles and boundaries even if the kids are still close.

4. Create a work space

Research shows working from home is less stressful when you have a dedicated work area. This helps you mentally and physically separate roles and boundaries.

With younger kids, you may want to have a symbolic boundary, such as a bookshelf or a room divider, so you can still see and hear them.

Invest in a good noise-cancelling headset and an ergonomically designed desk and table.

Make small traffic-light signs to indicate to young ones when they can and cannot interrupt. Use alarms to give you 10-minute reminders before you need to change gear from work to parenting.

When you are about to transition, write a note on what you want to do when you come back. This will help reduce the spill-over of those incomplete tasks into your next activity.

5. Build a community

Gather every human and virtual resource you can find to aid mental well-being and efficiency. You, your partner and your kids will need social stimulation beyond each other.

Organise virtual play dates through video chat. Reach out to the parents of your child's classmates to help share the load. Another parent doing a video music class or a virtual art class might free up precious time for you to do something else.

6. Look after yourself

Don't forget you also need some time to unwind.

This is the time to shed guilt and be generous to yourself. Don't beat yourself up for mistakes and missed targets. You are working in a brave new world and it will take time to adjust.

Be patient. Learn from each day by taking note of what worked and what didn't. With time you will find a rhythm that works for you, your partner, your colleagues and the young ones at home.

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Read the [original article](#). School News added the second headline as context for our readers.

<https://www.schoolnews.co.nz/2020/03/6-strategies-to-juggle-work-and-young-kids-at-home-its-about-flexibility-and-boundaries/>

I know all our parents and caregivers have been receiving emails from the class teachers with work and regular updates. A big thank you to them for their help and guidance. The work provided is there as a resource and a tool for you to not only educate but also help hold your children and give them a sense of structure and rhythm. Use the materials provided as best suites you. The staff will be working on additional ways to support the children and yourselves when we return at the beginning of term 2. I will be contacting parents and caregivers directly with more detailed information towards the end of the second week of the holiday. It is really important that as a community we stay connected with each other and support each other, we are here to help.

Finally, I sent this uplifting verse out to parents and caregivers a short while ago but thought it would be lovely to include it again for our whole community. Read this every morning and every night to inspire you and to take into your sleep.

A Verse for Our Time

We must eradicate from the soul
All fear and terror of what comes towards man out of the future.

We must acquire serenity
In all feelings and sensations about the future.

We must look forward with absolute equanimity
To everything that may come.

And we must think only that whatever comes
Is given to us by a world-directive full of wisdom.

It is part of what we must learn in this age,
namely, to live out of pure trust,
Without any security in existence.

Trust in the ever present help
Of the spiritual world.

Truly, nothing else will do
If our courage is not to fail us.

And let us seek the awakening from within ourselves
Every morning and every evening.

Rudolf Steiner

Ngā mihi

Sue

Please note! Change of term break due to Covid-19: from Monday 30th March - Tuesday 14th April