

keeping learning going...

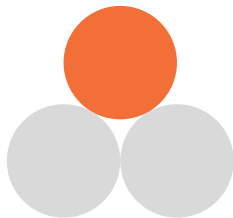
how can we maintain the balance between being
a parent of a teenager and their teacher?



why is this important?

Supporting your teenager at home with their learning is a challenge at the best of times, but now that they are at home all the time, the challenge has suddenly grown! High school students may be feeling stressed about exams, anxiety over assignments or even sadness due to the fact that isolation means time away from their friends. You might find an increase in frustration levels, anger and moodiness in the first few weeks of this period of adjustment (or to be honest you may have had a few years of that by now!). Remember that your teenager is most likely going through puberty, and together with feeling uncertain about all the changes in their lives they may become oppositional and defiant. This is normal and will be another challenge for all parents to deal with. So, how do we get the balance right between being a parent and being a teacher?

key ideas in this kit



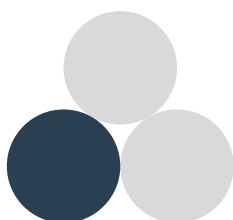
the head

Planning and prioritising your day.



the heart

Supporting our souls (and our children's).



the hands

Process and tools to make each day easier.

the head

reflection

We can only do our best! Our role as parents is not to replicate being the teacher in the classroom, but to be the one who supports, encourages and finds the best ways forward. Much of this has to do with the mindset we take into working with our teenagers in a remote classroom environment. All parents will feel a sense of doubt and uncertainty to some extent, so it is important to be clear about what our role is in this environment.

What's been the hardest thing about transitioning to remote learning? What's been an unexpected benefit?

tools

- **Trust yourself:** Your mindset is the number one thing here! Remember, you know your children better than anyone else and, because you understand them inside out, you will be best placed to know what makes them tick.
- **Forgive yourself:** Most parents are not trained teachers so this will be a whole new learning experience for you. You will probably make mistakes, but you will almost certainly be a great support for your teenager. If you don't get it right every time, just remember that no one does, not even the most experienced teachers. At the very least, start strong and finish strong, and know that there may be some rough patches in the middle!
- **Support:** It is sometimes too easy to think that just because they are now teenagers that we expect them to just get on with it. Yes, there will be plenty of times when you can and should expect your teenager to dive in and get it done, but remember they are still learning. Be a role model here, tell them how you would solve a problem, or research a new idea, or maybe even share some of the challenges you have in your work to show them how to resolve an issue.

the head

- **Learn together:** You may not be the expert in teaching maths, but you will know more than you think. In fact, one of the most important ways to teach your child is to model being a learning yourself. If you can't remember how to solve tricky maths questions, there are lots of ways you can find out. [Khan Academy](#) is a great resource with really clear videos and explanations on a whole bunch of topics.

action

Schedule a time to call your school to ask about the resources they are using and how best they can be built into the learning at home. Do a cross check at home to make sure things like passwords and accessibility are working.

reflection

Let's be honest, not everything is going to go smoothly. Just the fact that you will be in each other's space much more than normal could lead to more arguments and flare ups over the most minor things. There will be times when kids will get tired and frustrated, when they may otherwise have let it wash off. Parents will feel pulled in a thousand directions as they try to negotiate the landscape between parenting, teaching and getting on with their own job! Now is the time to look after each other. Be respectful, talk to each other, have a sense of humour and, most importantly, be mindful of your own wellbeing.

Reflect on how you've spoken to your children about the current situation. Have you explained to them what is happening? Have they challenged you about not seeing their friends or their grandparents and how have you responded?

tools

- **Love them!** The best teachers show a lot of warmth, kindness and understanding to their students. Don't think you have to be the tough disciplinarian. Love them, be patient and be kind. They are in this with you too. They will have lots of difficulties and uncertainties, so work together and make it as positive as you can. Give them a hug if they need it, suggest a brain break and give them plenty of praise when things go well.
- **Take an interest.** This one goes without saying. If you do nothing else, just take a genuine interest in what they are learning about, actively listen to your child and have some great conversations with them!
- **Ask for help:** You are not expected to jump into the role of an experienced teacher and make things happen in a day or two! So, ask for help when you are unsure. Schools will be well aware of the need to help parents and so feel comfortable in asking for help. Teachers love sharing their areas of expertise and so this will almost certainly be something that they want to do with you.

the heart

- **Mental health breaks:** If they need a break - give it to them. Maybe they need to sleep in one morning; maybe they want McDonalds for lunch one day. Make sure you give your children little morale boosters every now and then to keep them going through this challenging time. And make sure you also set aside time to care for yourself, whether it be yoga, meditation, exercise, or just finding a quiet space to read and switch off.
- **Mentors:** It's great for your teenager to have a connection with another adult in their life. Often teenagers don't want to open up about everything to their parents, which is a natural part of growing up and establishing their own identity. And now they're stuck at home with only their immediate family for company! Make sure you facilitate connections with other adults like an uncle or aunt, or a family friend, who may be important in their life. They may be a bit shy about initiating the connection online, so set up a Zoom call and then subtly fade into the background so they can open up a bit if they need to.

action

Monitor carefully your whole family's mental health. If people are struggling, talk to them about what might make this time easier. Your child's school also has access to agencies that can provide professional support so contact your child's teacher or the relevant well-being staff member to access that support.

the hands

reflection

Teenagers thrive on routines. They create a feeling of certainty and security. Within these routines, they feel safe to try new things, explore their creative side and take on new challenges. Don't feel like you have to have all the answers.

tools

All great teachers have a range of strategies they use to differentiate, run formative assessments and provide students with feedback. Here are some of our best tips when it comes to using these key teaching tools in remote learning environments.

- **Hand over responsibility:** This is not about being hands off and removing yourself from all obligations. In fact, it is quite the opposite. This is where you need to get involved in designing the physical learning environments, timetables and helping set goals and targets. Be the guide on the side rather than taking over and dictating terms.
- **Give them choice:** The best learning happens when there is an element of choice involved, and teenagers especially need to feel like they have a say in things. So, rather than thinking the learning is about doing more maths problems from the textbook, they might prefer to ask their teacher via email or on a call, or sometimes they might prefer to contact their friends for help. Both are ok if done properly and with purpose. Remember - guide, don't prescribe!
- **Have a routine, but be flexible:** If you feel that they need a break, give them one! That might be as simple as doing some exercise, or maybe moving onto another area of learning. There is an art to creating an ebb and flow throughout the day and even within a lesson. Again, trust your instincts on this. Build in times for breaks, do a 7 minute boot camp or kick a ball. Yoga and meditation will also be important for many high school students during this time, as will finding some personal space and quiet 'switch-off' time.

the hands

- **Help them get organised:** Schools will be scheduling special Zoom classes, they will be setting deadlines and they will be expecting your child to find online resources. This is challenging for many children. At school, they've got teachers and friends to gently nudge them when they forget things and point them in the right direction. Chat with your child each morning and ask them what are the classes they are expected to be attending 'live' and what is the work that they are expected to complete. If they 'don't know', then contact their teacher to find out. Be patient, this is a whole different way of working for your child and they have lost the support of their teachers and their friends.

action

A great way to create a sense of choice is by handing over as much of the routines and structures that you can. Ask your child how they want to design their day and find out if their school has given them guides to follow. Help them if they need, but allow them to draw up their own timetable and daily routines. Remember, they will be much more likely to do something if they have a sense of ownership and choice.

thank you for all you do to educate our children

the EC crew



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**professional learning +
support that changes schools**

Education Changemakers is an organisation founded by teachers, for teachers. We have a range of resources you can draw on from podcasts to videos, and books to workshops. If you would like to read more about how we may be able to partner with your school, head on over to educationchangemakers.com.