**Tips and Tricks to Survive At-Home Learning**

***Students:***

Schools have been closed, but learning isn’t cancelled. You still have assignments that must be turned in, and you can probably figure out a system that will work for a day or two, but long-term? That’s another issue. Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

1. **Create a schedule and stick to it.** 
   1. *Get up -* As teenagers it’s hard to get up in the morning – I understand that. However, your brain was created to work better and more efficiently in the morning, so get up and get out of bed. It doesn’t mean you have to be up at 6 am, but you should be moving by 9:30 at the latest.
   2. *One hour at a time –* Plan your time. Do one subject for an hour (max), then take a break. Realistically you have 4 academic subjects – maybe 5 if you’re in middle school. Plan to get at least 2 done before lunch, 3 if you’re ambitious. After an hour, take a break and move around. Drink some water. Dance. Something to move the blood around in your body.
   3. *Phones down -* Put your phone where it’s not going to distract you. Take a look at it during your breaks, but while you’re working you don’t need it. If you need music, set up Spotify with your playlist and let it play. You’ll get more done and you’ll finish up quicker – I promise.
   4. *Eat and hydrate -*  You’re going to need to hydrate throughout the day – Don't forget to drink your water. Also, eat something healthy. Just because your home and there’s snacks, don’t dismiss the power of an apple and a couple of slices of cheese. Get a little natural sugar and some protein into your bod – Your brain needs it!
2. **Ask for help.**
   1. Need academic help? Email your teacher. Ask lots of questions. If you can’t get what you need from them, or if you just want to talk to one of us, call/text us. Caroline and I are super sciency, Alan and I are super mathy (although text Caroline if you need calculus help), and Tyler is all things language arts. Abby would love to give music lessons for all you band/chorus people.
   2. Need spiritual help? Call us! We are here for you and we want to hear from you. Call your small group leaders! FaceTime is your friend – use it!
   3. Anxious or that kind of thing? See above!
3. **Get outside.**
   1. Find some time every single day to breathe fresh air. Even if it’s raining, you can sit in your garage with the doors open and just breathe. It will help with the boredom and with anxiousness. Breathe.
4. **Explore something new.**
   1. You’re going to have time left over each day, so dig into your hobbies a bit OR start a new one. You like to bake, then bake. You like to draw, then draw. You’ve always wanted to learn how to do the cool lettering stuff – now's your chance. Go learn something you want to learn.
   2. Play a board/card game...or two...or seven. It relieves stress and creates memories. Just do it!

***Parents:***

Dear Worried, Anxious, Suddenly-Feeling-Like-You're-In-Over-Your-Head Homeschooling Parent,

This was not what you imagined Spring Semester of 2020 would be like, I know. Who would’ve thought that the schools would close, and our play spaces would close and that we would be asked to work from home as much as possible? It’s been a lot to take in.

And it’s going to be hard – not going to sugar coat that at all. When you move from one ‘normal’ to a new one, it’s difficult. There are changes in routines and procedures that must happen, and then they may have to be revised – sometimes many times before you figure out what actually works. But there is also beauty and joy and grace and peace amid the chaos. Let’s see if I can help you find it a little bit faster!

As a former homeschool mom, public school teacher and student life ministry partner, I can honestly say that this time will be the most challenging and the most rewarding. Here are few tips to help you survive:

* **Pray**. This is the single most important thing you’re going to do every day – some days, you’ll be on your knees multiple times, but that’s ok. God likes hearing from you! Start each day praying that your day will go well, that hours will be stretched, that productivity will be enhanced, that you will see God working in the lives of your children and your family. At the end of each day, look back and thank God for getting you through it and for all that He did.
* **You have this!** There are not many subjects that you are not equipped and qualified to teach or lead your child through. In fact, unless your student is in college and taking something crazy complicated like neurobiological engineering, you’re more than capable. And...you have Google if all else fails. Most of us think we can’t do today’s math or science or writing...and that’s simply not true. It might take you a minute, but you can do it. Hang in there.
* **School at home isn’t school at school**. That seems like a very simple thing to realize, but it’s not. School at home should look a little different. And probably different for every kid in your household. Some students need to be at a table or desk – others need the couch or the floor. My son did math under the dining room table for YEARS. Made me crazy, but it worked for him. Be flexible.
* **Schedules are necessary**. Create a schedule and build in some margin so that when something takes longer than you thought, you don’t get crazy. Stay loose but keep the kiddos accountable to what they’re supposed to be doing. It’s a fine line, but worth the effort.
* **Ask for help**. Don’t let this season suck you under. There’s help out there – just ask. We are putting together a list of teachers and educators that can help; your small group will help support you spiritually; the pastors are here to counsel you and your family; FaceTime and Skype are easily accessible when you need face to face time but can’t get out.
* **Relax**. Take a deep breath...breathe in the Holy Spirit and let Him work in you. Breathe out all the yuck and the insecurity, the frustration, the anxiety. It’s ok if everything doesn’t get done exactly the way you had planned. Set your priorities, give everyone a little grace, and enjoy this time at home with your kids.

Most of these suggestions will work for most students...but every child is different and needs different things. If your child struggles with attention issues, you may only be able to work on a single subject for 30 minutes – it's ok. Getting outside and moving helps most people, so feel free to send your kids outside for a few minutes as a break. Nutrition and hydration are key – but kids will eat you out of house and home if you’re not careful, so set some rules around snacks.

The best advice I can give you to survive this uncertain season is to remember that God is in control. He knew this was coming; He is not surprised at all. He loves you and He loves your children. Nothing that comes your way is bigger than He is, so lean into Him and let Him pour into you. Make some memories with your family so that when all is said and done, we look back on this time and know that what the world meant for evil, God meant for good.

If you need anything, I am a phone call or text or email away. Happy to help any way I can (except with calculus...can’t help with that. 😊 )

In Christ,

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