

Common Struggles With Virtual Schooling & Tips To Help

Does your child struggle with any of the things mentioned below? We have some helpful tips you can try to ease some of the tough things you and your child might be dealing with.

- Loss of focus
- Lack of social time
- Differing plans/expectations in two homes
- Until now, child has been able to get away with significantly underachieving at school. Now expectations are higher, creating power struggles & tears
- Work is too easy
- Too many things on one page to sift through / overwhelm
- Wishing you didn't need to hover over your child for them to get work done
- Balancing social time with screen time
- Child feels they do not need to show their work; teacher disagrees and requires everything to be written out
- Hates online classes
- Dislikes the zoom meetings – too chaotic, can't hear teacher. Child is annoyed by her classmates goofing off and being loud and inattentive

Helpful Tips

- **Engage in positive conversation.** Asking, "what was one good thing about your day today?" at the end of the day - with your child, or even as a family at dinnertime.
- **Routine!** Although school is virtual, keeping a school schedule is important. (I.e. – get up, get dressed, have breakfast by 8:30am, just like you would during school normally)
- **Encouragement, stay positive!** Growth mindset is key to overcoming challenges. (I.e. – from "This stinks! There's no way I'm going to ever be able to do this!" to... "This is tough, and I might not be able to do it YET, but I'm going to try again.")
- **Take advantage of breaks.** Having breaks can ease stress and tension for kids. Encourage them to get up, stretch, and look away from their screen – even if it's just for a few minutes
- **Allowing transition time between homes.** Realize that if your child needs to switch off between two households, they may require some time to adjust to a different routine. Keep this in mind and allow a little more patience and understanding. Talk to your child about the transition, and ask them what would help them.
- **Stop information overload.** Many gifted kids experience that "information overload". It is tough to see all of their assignments at once in front of them and get overwhelmed. To help, you can...
 - Break up assignments into chunks and put a goal due date on them. (Use their Google calendar or a marker board)
 - You can use sticky notes to cover up info on the screen you don't need to see right now.
 - If your teacher is using online tools, find out if there is a way to only see one assignment at a time, instead of the entire list.

- **Level up an assignment.** If an assignment is too easy, find ways to make it more challenging. For example, if your child needs to do a presentation, ask them to include more details, add photos, learn a new feature in Google Slides or PowerPoint to use in their presentation. Communicate with your child's teacher and ask if they have any suggestions on how to bump up the challenge.
- **Reading – have options!** Read-alouds for younger kiddos (check out YouTube or your teacher's website for links), or go through your local library for an audio book instead of a hard copy
- **Set timers.** This can help kids keep time at top-of-mind. It can also help them with homework. If your kiddo is struggling to focus, discuss a length of time they think they can focus on their work, and set a timer for that amount of time. (I.e. – 15 minutes of homework, 5 minute break). They might look forward to the break, and see that they can actually focus on their work longer than they thought. Be sure to encourage them and celebrate when they make it through successfully.
- **Limiting or not allowing chats/texts with friends during school hours.**
- **Telling your child that you are open to suggestions, as long as their brain is engaged.** A full school day is a long time to sit in front of a screen. Ask your child if they have any ideas of what might help them. Standing up for a period of time during class, sitting in a different chair, maybe putting on some background music while they do their homework. Engaging your child in conversation will help you see things from their perspective, and hopefully come up with ideas to help them have a better experience.
- **Communicate with your child's teacher.** This might seem overly simplistic, but having a phone conversation with the teacher and letting them know you want to work WITH them to help your child is a great place to start. You are your child's best advocate. Expressing any concerns you have to the teacher may alert him/her to some things he/she could do differently. Maybe other parents are having the same issue. Letting your child's teacher know you're on their side, that you appreciate their hard work and taking the time to speak with you is very important. Transitioning to virtual learning has been especially tough on educators. So let them know you would like to work as a team to help your child.
- **Balancing social time and screen time is difficult.** Set limits to social screen time, and talk to your child about those limits. Offer different options, like talking on the phone, or having an outside playdate/going for a walk together instead of video chatting if you're comfortable doing so. This will take more effort, but it will also help them to build relationships during this difficult time.
- **Check in on your child regularly.** If your child is having trouble staying on task during the school day, check in, and let them know you'll be doing that. Many kids have difficulty due to executive functioning lag, so the check-ins may help. Take advantage of breaks, and ask them questions about class to stay involved. If classwork and participation is a big issue, see if you can schedule a weekly check-in with your child's teacher.