

5 Tips for Helping Kids Deal with Missed School Activities

The coronavirus pandemic has forced schools from all levels to close. For these children, the abrupt closure left them with feelings of frustration, sadness, and disappointment. Many are missing out on so many major rites of passage such as graduation ceremonies or the prom. Other kids are missing out on their regular school activities like art classes, band practice, sports, or any of their favorite after-school clubs and organizations. Basically, they just miss life with their friends.

While everyone initially thought this was just a relatively temporary situation, it seems that school may be out for a while. In many cases, possibly until the end of this year. There is no vaccine yet and keeping everyone safe is the main priority at this point. This can be daunting and overwhelming for everyone. Having kids around at home 24/7 can definitely turn a peaceful life into chaos. Children may feel a bit sad and disappointed that school activities were canceled.

Supporting them during this period is highly important, especially since there are so many uncertainties surrounding when these activities will resume. Here are some tips for how you can help your kids deal with this situation:

1. Talk to kids about the coronavirus

Every parent needs to educate their kids about the effects of the coronavirus and why schools need to be closed. Talk to them about why self-isolation and social distancing is critical at this moment. Make them be aware of the implications of this virus and why this needs to be taken seriously, without arousing panic.

Your kids may get incorrect and alarming information about COVID-19 from their friends or online sources. Parents need to explain the facts, in age-appropriate language, about the virus and its health implications. Give them the assurance that you are doing the best that you can to ensure that they are safe and healthy, without overwhelming them with information.

Your kids are scared and anxious about this unseen virus that has been affecting everyone, so regular check-ins are a must. Hold meetings with your kids to discuss their concerns and fears, as well how to incorporate safety health practices at home.

2. Monitor their screen time

Since there are no schools or school activities to worry about, kids will be likely spending more time now watching television or browsing through various social media channels. It is important

that you monitor these activities. Set a limit to their screen time and avoid listening or watching any upsetting or fake news with your kids around. They will definitely pick up these ideas and it could just aggravate the stress they are feeling at the moment. Remind them that not all stories they may read or hear regarding COVID-19 are all true and most are based on rumors and falsified information.

3. Emphasize the importance of social distancing

Eventually, there will come a time when your child will complain why it's unfair that they can't go to school or see and hang out with their friends. They will start to feel hurt that they can't have school graduation or why their birthday party has to be postponed.

When these happen, validate their feelings and acknowledge their frustrations. However, make sure that you emphasize that closing schools and postponing school activities are the right thing to do right now. Educate them on the importance of social distancing and explain how taking time off from regular activities is ideal for everyone. Let them understand that all of these are for health and safety, not just for them but for the whole community.

4. Praise them for doing their part

As you educate your kids about the virus and its implications, point out to them how proud you are that they are staying home. While they may complain or eventually start to get bored just being at home, acknowledge that you are all doing this together as a family. Everyone is doing their part to help stop the spread of the virus. And they are making a big contribution to the community. Make it clear to them that everyone's patience and hard work will help bring this crisis to an end sooner.

5. Create a new normal

Your kids will feel bad about school closures, but it is imperative that they move forward and accept this fact with optimism. To help them move forward, you need to create a "new normal" at home for the next few weeks. Sit down with them and explain the new structure that needs to be followed for their home-based days. You can ask your kids to help contribute to the activities they want to do in a day. This could be setting household chores, meal times, various fun activities in the afternoon, or schoolwork and reading time. Whatever that structure is, make sure there is consistency throughout the days or weeks you will be at home.

Keeping your family safe is important at this point in our lives. Without activities, many children (or even adults) will feel a bit lost and disoriented about how to maximize their time. Be with your kids during this time. Work together and have fun together.

For more information on how to help your kids deal with canceled school activities, check out The Pillars Christian Learning Center.

