

Parental worry; “Am I doing enough?”

HSE Clinical Psychologist Dr Jennifer Shore writes about how to focus on your child and what they need during COVID 19

One of the measures implemented to help protect society during the Covid 19 pandemic has been the closure of schools, preschools, Montessori, crèches, etc. Teachers and educators are designing programmes and schedules for learning at home, which can be very helpful for those children that are willing to sit down and engage with the work. However, for many parents, trying to get their children to do school work at home can be quite stressful, and can add to the worries they might feel and the demands of day to day living during the current restrictions.

Below are some helpful things to consider if you, as a parent, find yourself thinking “Am I doing enough for my child’s education?”

Focus on your child and what they need; firstly, you know your child! Hearing about what other parents are doing with their children does not mean you should feel under pressure about what you are doing with your child. The time you spend playing and interacting with your child, cuddled up on the couch watching a movie, allowing them space to play video games and talk to their friends can be just as important.

Consider the educational stage your child is at; whilst each school year is important, during a crisis – like the one we are experiencing now – it is important to remember whether there is a long term impact of your child not doing their school work now. For example, those that are in 6th year and waiting to sit their leaving certificate examinations may want to focus on their school work as they feel the outcome of the exams impact on their potential placement in a college course. Similarly, some in 3rd year who are due to sit the junior certificate exams may leave school after the exams and thus want something to show for their time in secondary school. Outside of these years though, does it really matter that, in the long term, your child may not be able to engage with the home programme?

Everyone is in the same position; when schools re-open and restrictions on daily life are eventually removed, every child will return to school with similar experiences – they will all have been at home, many may have been in some way affected by Covid 19, most will have missed their friends (though many won’t admit to missing school!) and all will need to re-engage with the school schedule. Teachers and educators are wonderfully trained and will be able to work out where each child is at and act accordingly.

There are also many ways **you are already promoting your child’s development and learning** without doing school work; activities like baking/cooking, gardening, art, household chores all teach your child valuable life skills for their future.

Focus on the basics; sleep, food, exercise and social contact are the four key routines necessary for you and your child’s well-being. By focusing on these, you are modelling to your child the importance of these routines as well as promoting your child’s resilience and ability to cope when life is challenging.

Survival is key; daily life has changed quite dramatically for many people. Some might use this time to learn new skills or do something they don’t usually do, and that’s great if it works for them.

However, do not feel pressure to do what others are doing – do what works for you and your family.
Remember, you are doing enough by simply focusing on getting through each day as best you can.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

*Photo available on request.

*Text can be used in full or as part of a larger feature for print or online.