

## Ten Tips for Parenting during the Pandemic

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Would it surprise you to know that most Tribal families are super confident in their parenting abilities... that one of the most important values is supporting kid's success in school...and finally that Native parents are generally less frustrated with their kids than non-Native parents? Repeated studies have found these things to be accurate, yet are these truths playing out in the middle of the pandemic when people are triggered into experiencing more anxiety and depression, kids are bored and acting out, and formal school systems may not be available?

If you are one of those parents that is feeling the squeeze, here are some tips to use for those Covid parenting blues, especially for those whose kids are stuck learning from home!

1. **Space:** Make an area for learning that is separate from adult space, even if it is a teeny space. Make or buy a room divider, here is one to make for under 20 bucks: [https://youtu.be/An\\_aYMTeOs8](https://youtu.be/An_aYMTeOs8). For a kid's learning space, use a basket or plastic silverware organizer for school supplies, make it as far from the TV as possible and try to keep it for learning only. Pinterest has a million ideas and here are some more: <https://www.parents.com/kids/education/back-to-school/how-to-set-up-a-virtual-learning-space-at-home-for-kids/>
2. **Physical Breaks:** Remember that for many kids learning online is a tough call, especially for younger kids. Frequent breaks are important, to move the body around. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children ages 6 to 17 engage in at least an hour of moderate to vigorous exercise a day; preschoolers 5 and younger should aim for at least three hours of active play over the course of the day. Xfinity offers free kids and adult exercise and yoga classes as does Youtube. Here are some ideas: <https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/best-kids-exercise-videos/>
3. **Boundaries:** Set realistic and doable boundaries with kids, providing them support to meet with expectations rather than punishment if they do not. Consequences should be developmentally appropriate and not severe. The way to change negative behaviors has to do with giving the child information on what you want and rewarding them when they do the positive behavior

with praise, hugs, etc. Ignoring the negative behavior if possible is appropriate. Here is how to change behaviors with proven methods: <https://icebreakerideas.com/behavior-modification-techniques/>

4. Passion: Doing creative things that kids are passionate about and are fun is important to add into the daily routine. Structured formal activities should not be done for more than 2-4 hours a day according to the experts or kids lose the ability to pay attention so intersperse fun into the day when possible! Here is a list of 97 activities <https://www.todayparent.com/family/activities/fun-things-to-do-at-home/>
5. Self-care: Make a list of needs and wants. Needs are what you have to have to survive and can be financial, emotional, physical and spiritual. Wants make your life more enjoyable. This is so important and so hard to do because you may be used to putting yourself last. However, if you are happy, everyone else will be happier around you and you will be role modelling to your kids the importance of self-care! Here is an example of someone's wants list <https://www.awai.com/2011/08/57-things-other-people-want-from-life/>
6. Realistic: Be forgiving and less judgmental about your capabilities as a parent right now. You are doing the best you can with what you got thrown, a real curve ball! Unrealistic expectations turn into future resentments. Here are 42 pages of brief self-compassion mindfulness exercises to help let go of stress and self-judgment, practice one a day! [https://www.mindfulnessstudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Self-Compassion\\_and\\_Mindfulness.pdf](https://www.mindfulnessstudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Self-Compassion_and_Mindfulness.pdf)

If you are struggling with stress or feelings of being overwhelmed, counseling is available on Mondays with Amy Sohler, a licensed mental health counselor who practices Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to help you work on creating functional and healthy ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. She has over 30 years in the field of behavioral health and addictions and has spent time providing services to celebrities, four Tribal communities, treatment center clients and many others! Call 360.413.2727 for more information.