

## When school takes place at home - tips for families

Dear parents and guardians,

As a result of measures to protect against further contagion, schools have been closed and school learning has been moved to the home. This extraordinary situation also offers an opportunity for you as a family to focus on things for which there is little time in everyday life. You can use the time to grow closer as a family. You may be able to revive rituals or introduce new ones, such as cooking and talking together, walking, playing or just being together.

As a parent, you can neither replace school lessons nor take on the role of teacher. Your child is provided with homework by the school. Your task will be to support and motivate your child. We have put together tips and suggestions for you to successfully organize the coming weeks.

### How do I organize learning at home?

It is always difficult to work through a mountain of tasks on your own. We'll give you tips on how to help your child complete the tasks they receive from the school to be done at home in the next few weeks:

- *Get an overview:* Take the time to have a look with your child at what they have to do and plan the week together. In addition to school tasks, this also includes household duties.
- *Clarify expectations and prioritize tasks:* Tell your child honestly what you expect from them and ask them what is important to them for the next few weeks without school. Some things are non-negotiable, other things your child can decide for themselves, depending on their age (e.g. which task they start with or whether they prefer to do their schoolwork in the morning or afternoon). Clarify together which tasks are particularly important and must not be omitted under any circumstances.
- *Make a plan:* Draw up a weekly plan for which **specific** tasks are done and when. This

way, everyone is clear on what has been agreed, thus avoiding misunderstandings and disputes.

- With a *task list for each day* (3-5 tasks), you can divide the "big mountain" into smaller daily chunks, making it manageable and less intimidating for your child. Being able to check off completed tasks is good for your child and motivating.
- *Arrange the workspace:* Make sure your child has a fixed place for their schoolwork where they are not distracted. Quiet music in the background isn't necessarily disruptive but moving images (television, computer) and speech (audio stories) distract the brain.
- *Study hours and breaks:* Use your or your child's watch, timer or egg clock to limit study phases, e.g. to 30 minutes. Each time concentration is broken (for example, when a message comes in on the mobile phone), your child needs time to get back into a task. This slows down progress. It's better to take a break after a concentrated work phase. Young children need a change or a break after 15 minutes.
- *When it's over, it's over:* When the tasks are done for the day, "school" is out! Let them enjoy this time and don't come spontaneously with new tasks.

### How do I motivate my child to learn?

Motivation is the central basis for push-starting the learning processes. A high degree of self-motivation is conducive to the mood, self-confidence and learning success. But external motivation is also effective, as long as the learning is not experienced as forced. Strong external control will not only generate feelings of tension and a bad mood in your child, but will also negatively affect learning success.

Here are some tips on how to help your child in their motivation for learning:

- Plan the study time together with your child and let your child have a say. Give your child a pledge of trust.
- Agree realistic learning goals with your child and make it clear to them that you trust them to achieve the goals. Encourage your child!
- Discuss with your child what they can do when faced with difficulties.
- Make sure that your child also rewards himself for attaining their goals. The goal and the type of reward should, however, be well balanced and in proportion.
- Show your child that what they are learning is important and that you value your child's learning efforts. Be a positive role model for your child.
- Friends of the child can be invited join and support them in their studies by phone or video-chat.
- Show an interest in your child's learning success but avoid the "excessive" control described above.

### How does my child learn sustainably?

Even if you see your child learning complex things seemingly effortlessly in their free time, this unfortunately does not guarantee that the same will apply to schoolwork. Study content does not always arouse interest in the child. Learning such content becomes more successful if it is possible to select, organise and embed the learning content appropriately in the existing knowledge structure.

Learning techniques help with the structuring, storage and networking of the learning content. As a general rule, the better it can be combined with your child's prior knowledge, the more sustainably new content can be learned. Depending on the learning objective and the content of the learning, different **learning techniques** are helpful:

- underline or mark important points (e.g. in a text),
- summarize the contents independently (orally or in writing),
- explain it to others (e.g. in a learning partnership or to parents),
- develop pictorial representations,

- memorize through repeated reading or reading together,
- create notes or flashcards (e.g. for vocabulary),
- develop your own questions about the subject matter (e.g. a text),
- formulate headings for sections (e.g. in a text),
- construe examples of applications (e.g. from everyday life).

It is important for your child to realize what they have already understood and what not. So, together, try to get an idea of how your child approaches learning tasks. Every child already has experience with certain learning techniques. But your own experiences with learning techniques can also be interesting for your child. Advise and encourage your child to review the previous techniques and test out new ones.

### How do we structure the day as a family?

Your family life is changing a lot due to the elimination of usual activities. This poses major challenges for self-organization. In any case, it is important that you organize the day well:

- Try to maintain a daily rhythm, i.e. agree a time to get up, keep the usual rituals for breakfast.
- Plan meals together – if you work outside the home: prepare lunch for/with your child so that they are cared for throughout the day. Preparing food together can be a nice joint activity.
- Gather ideas for leisure time. Remind yourself and your child about what can be fun (e.g. painting, tinkering, playing games, making music).
- Whether fitness, yoga or other forms of movement – a lot of things can be done in your own living room. Use offers from apps and videos to bring exercise and sports programs into the home. The key to success is a fixed time of the day. Don't take too much on and celebrate every success!
- Make agreements with your child with regard to **media consumption**. What games and apps does your child use? Are there alternatives? Suggestion: Watch movies in the

original with subtitles (older children) or watch movies together and talk about them (younger children). Limit media time! If necessary, use locks for devices and routers.

Make sure your child finds enough balance through exercise and contact with "real" people. Also acknowledge the opportunity that these media offer at this time, namely as an educational option and an opportunity to stay in touch with the circle of friends.

### **When things get heated ... How do I deal with conflicts?**

You and your child are now spending more time together than usual. Conflicts are very possible. When they do occur, the key is to keep calm, take a deep breath and then look for solutions together. To make this work better, here are a few tips:

- Take your time and always resolve a conflict in peace, not when you are annoyed.
- Sit down together at a table with a pen and some paper in front of you in case you want to write something down or agree things together.
- Ask yourself in advance what the core issue is. Determine how much time you want to spend on the conversation.
- Don't mix everything together under the motto, "And what I've always wanted to tell you...!" A conflict arises whenever one person wants something different from the other and no one gives in.
- Talk about how you and your child perceive the situation. Stay friendly and approachable.
- Both of you need to formulate your interests, your needs and your wishes. Look at the differences. There is nothing wrong with wanting different things.
- Look for a common solution, don't be satisfied with less.
- In the event of an escalation, interrupt the conversation and resume it later.
- If necessary, just say that you are hoping for solutions from your child and then remain silent.

If you and your child notice that the conflicts are escalating and you are feeling increasingly

angry and helpless, contact a counselling centre (see info box below).

### **Cabin fever - and what now?**

When the usual daily routines and activities disappear and all family members spend longer periods in the home, a feeling of boredom can end up setting in due to the monotony.

Boredom allows you to break familiar behavioural patterns and discover old or new skills within you. If your child fewer external stimuli, after a while they will begin to translate existing experiences and knowledge into new actions in interaction with the environment. Your child needs time for this and you need patience! Children then creatively invent new games, fantasize stories and experiment with what they find. In this way, interests and talent can be discovered. One child starts sewing, another fills glasses with water and uses them to make music, a puzzle is made from a magazine or a new cake recipe is developed. And you can discover new sides to your child.

You can also rediscover your own creativity and sense of fun by accompanying your child and getting involved in their games. It can be exciting for your child to try out games from the pre-computer age. How about creating a story with pictures together as a book about this new, unfamiliar everyday life or making a collection of discovered and invented games?

Boredom also offers provides the opportunity to let your thoughts run wild, to dream and to notice what does you good and what you miss. Children benefit when their parents have more time and are at home. Your child will feel comfortable being able to tell you things without being judged, if there is no necessity for explanations. Trust yourself to master this challenging situation well and sustainably for the future. And don't forget: "Boredom is the gateway to fantasy!"

### **How to deal with fear when it comes?**

*"Why can't I go to school anymore?"*

*"Why can't we visit Grandma and Grandpa anymore?"*

*"When can I go back to the sports club?"*

*"What happens if you don't go to work anymore?"*

The many changes can lead to uncertainty in your child. Things that we cannot understand and classify frighten us. As a parent, how can you best respond to this?

- *Try to stay calm:* children feel the fears and insecurities of their parents. Do yourself a favour and try to relax. Talk about your concerns with your partner or in your circle of friends and don't pass them on to your child. Check out official internet sites (see link box below) so you can answer your child's questions. Don't let your child watch the news, depending on their age. Images tend to stick and can be unsettling.
- *Picking up what your child already knows:* In the last few days your child has heard a lot about the Corona virus. Talk about it together. What questions does your child have? Have they perhaps picked up information that is not correct? Also, keep an eye on your child's media consumption (see above) and, preferably, look at information together.
- *Explain in a child-friendly way:* It can be difficult, especially for younger children, to understand what a virus is. You may come up with alternative words to explain this, such as a disease that is new and which our body does not yet know. A vaccine, like against other diseases, is currently being developed. This is what many people around the world are working on at the moment. Further child-friendly information can be found for example on the ZDF children's news page, logo!, and on the Meditricks GmbH website (see link box below). Here, medical students explain the Corona virus and how to deal with it in an easy-to-understand video.
- *Self-responsibility:* Discuss with your child what you can do as a family to protect yourself from the disease. You can practice together washing your hands regularly and sneezing or coughing into the crook of your arm. Children love being praised when they can manage these things. (Video)calls with grandma and grandpa or with their friends also play an important role in dealing with the situation.
- *Feeling comfortable:* Conversations are best held in a quiet, calm atmosphere at home. Take time for your child and reassure them

that there is no reason to worry. Familiar structures (e.g. shared meals, being tucked into bed, reading aloud, playing, cuddles) are helpful for your child. It shouldn't be all about the Corona virus. A cheerful atmosphere at home is conducive to learning and feeling at ease.

### Information on the child and adolescent psychiatric counselling centre, Bremen Health Office

- personal contact on site is possible in cases of acute suicidal behaviour and in "subacute" clients
- Please do not come by **in person**, but rather always call first by telephone (also applies to parents)
- As usual, **the emergency number** is manned Mon. - Fr. 8.30am to 5pm (0421-361-6292).
- The staff can be reached by phone for all further concerns of parents and persons from school
- All diagnostic appointments are currently suspended
- These circumstances will apply until at least mid-April 2020

### Information from the Office of Social Services, Bremen:

- There are no more personal appointments; parents are contacted by mail and phone
- An exception is made for home visits in the event of an acute risk to the well-being of the child. These are weighed and decided by the case manager.
- Contacting the case managers by mail and telephone is guaranteed. If you do not receive any response, please try at next level of authority
- The 24h emergency service continues to be staffed and available (0421-6 99 11 33)
- All telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are summarized here: <https://www.amtfuersozialdienste.bremen.de/>

### Annexes:

- Checklist for families
- bke Online Counselling from the Federal Conference for Educational Counselling
- What's next for education, exams, etc.? Online peer consultation with the participation of the University of Hildesheim

### SENATOR FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION:

[HTTPS://WWW.BILDUNG.BREMEN.DE/START-1459](https://www.bildung.bremen.de/start-1459)

### REGIONAL ADVISORY AND SUPPORT CENTRES:

[WWW.REBUZ.BREMEN.DE](http://www.rebuz.bremen.de)

### Official information pages:

Robert Koch Institute: [www.rki.de](http://www.rki.de)

Federal Government: [www.bundesregierung.de](http://www.bundesregierung.de)

Child-friendly websites: Children's news LOGO: <https://www.zdf.de/kinder/logo/wichtige-infos-zum-coronavirus-100.html>

Meditricks GmbH: [www.meditricks.de/cke](http://www.meditricks.de/cke)

**Telephone pastoral care** is open to all people: <http://telefonseelsorge.de>

The Psychological "**Open Door**" **Counselling Centre** of the Catholic Community Association in Bremen offers telephone conversations on the current situation. The counselling centre can be reached: Monday-Friday from 10am – 12pm and 3pm – 6pm at tel. number: 0421-324272

Link to apply for a special child supplement due to the Corona crisis for single parents and low-income families: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/kiz>

### Games and sports for the home:

<https://www.kinderstarkmachen.de/sucht-vorbeugung/eltern/spielideen-fuer-zuhause.html>

[www.youtube.com/alba.berlin](http://www.youtube.com/alba.berlin)

#### Issuing institution:

School Psychological and Inclusion Educational Counselling and Support Centres (SIBUZ) in Berlin-Pankow

By Stefanie Höfer For Bremen



courtesy of the Senate Office for Education, Youth and Family, Berlin

## Family checklist for time at home during Corona isolation

Time at home with the whole family can be really lovely, but also exhausting.

So, it's a good idea to consciously structure this special phase of coexistence.

We would like to offer a few ideas for this.

Discuss the following together and create a family plan:

- When will you get up? When will you go to bed?
- When will you eat? Will the family eat together?
- When and where can the children learn in peace? When and where can the parents work in peace?
- Do the children complete their school tasks every day in one go (e.g. from 9am-12pm) or in smaller portions (e.g. 4x45min.)?
- Who helps the children with their tasks? Are they able to ask mum and dad questions? Are the parents sitting with them? Can friends or relatives offer help by phone or video chat?
- What jobs do the children have to do around the house? Who helps with the cooking, washing, laundry?
- When is time for tidying up and cleaning? For example, should everybody all clean up together for five minutes three times a day?
- When does everyone have time to themselves? How much time can be spent on mobile phones, TV, computers?
- What book can the children read? What kind of hobby can they pursue from home?
- When does the family do something nice together? E.g. playing a game, watching a movie, reading a book?
- When and where can you get some fresh air without getting closer than two meters to other people?

These suggestions are taken from the website <https://t1p.de/wifz>. There are more ideas there. For more information on the correct behaviour to reduce the risk from the virus, please click here: <https://t1p.de/z33l>

If you are concerned or have problems, the **advice hotline** is still available:

116111 for children and adolescents (Mon-Sat 2pm-8pm) or for parents 0800-1110550 (Mon-Fri 9-11am) or [www.nummergegenkummer.de](http://www.nummergegenkummer.de)

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## bke online counselling helps parents during the Corona crisis

What no one initially wanted to believe has now become a reality: more and more cultural institutions have to close, and events have to be cancelled. Companies are sending employees home to work from there and education ministers decided to close the schools. Suddenly the children are unexpectedly at home and the "cabin fever" threatens.

### The bke online counselling service also supports parents in this exceptional situation.

How can the family survive the coming weeks? What can parents do to ensure that the family can spend a "good time" together despite the restrictive external circumstances?

A regulated structure helps prevent a slip into chaos or arguments out of boredom. If you have a to-do list that includes both those things that have to be done as well as some fun, enjoyable activities, you are much less likely to be bored. That is why it is particularly important for school children to have set working and leisure times. Sometimes it also helps to incorporate special features into the day: a picnic on the living room floor or a mental arithmetic scavenger hunt through the apartment.

### Get help from outside in the event of conflicts

Spending many weeks together at home can be quite stressful for everyone involved and might put strain on the parent-child relationships. Conflicts that have been smouldering for some time often come to the surface in exceptional situations. In this case, it is advisable to seek specialist advice. In the special circumstances surrounding the Corona crisis, many educational and family counselling centres have been closed to the public in order to prevent the spread of the virus. The bke Parent Counselling service, in which the experts can also provide advice from their remote workplaces, is available around the clock for all concerns and needs, big or small. An exchange of ideas with other parents is also possible at any time via the bke Online Counselling service and can bring peace of mind and relief.

### Information about bke online counselling

Young people from 14 to 21 years of age and parents with children up to the age of 21 will find an individual online offer via the website <http://www.bke-beratung.de>.

The consultation is anonymous, free of charge and data-safe. The bke Parental Counselling service ([bke-elternberatung.de](http://www.bke-elternberatung.de)) supports parents and families in all matters relating to education: in the case of problematic family situations, separation and divorce, problems of the child in day-care or school or in his social environment.

With its qualified consultants, the bke Online Counselling service helps individually and quickly; it can offer valuable support at short notice and also in the event of a crisis. In addition to professional advice, those seeking advice are also able to exchange ideas with similarly affected people. This is why the offer is also suitable for supplementing face-to-face consultation.

### Contact bke Online Counselling

Would you like more information on educational topics? **Feel free to contact us!**

# CareHOPE - Care leavers at universities

## Online peer consultation:

We will be providing online advice until 19 April 2020!

We want to respond to the various difficulties of the current situation and our online platform can also help during the Corona virus crisis. We all have our different difficulties with the current changes in Germany, but some questions concern in particular the specific living situation of care leavers (young people from juvenile residential facilities):

- ☒ What's going to happen with my education?
- ☒ What about the exams I'm due to sit in the near future?
- ☒ How can I regulate my financial situation?
- ☒ Can I continue/extend my voluntary social year?

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**Are you concerned about these and many other questions, or do you just want to exchange ideas with others?**

**Then feel free to contact us via our online advice centre! We also want to make our resources available to you in difficult times and look forward to receiving enquiries from care leavers – even those not relating to study!**

We will make our offer available until 19 April 2020. Due to the current situation, we will respond to your request as soon as possible within 2 days. Of course, there are many special issues that are unexpected and new in the current situation. We don't have an immediate answer for everything, but we will make the most of our opportunities and networks to find one.

[www.jugend-hilfe-studiert.de](http://www.jugend-hilfe-studiert.de)