

# The Juggling Act

## Guide to Mental Wellness While Teleworking & Homeschooling

---

For nearly a year, life as we know it around the world has significantly changed. COVID-19 has created circumstances beyond our control, that we are forced to accommodate and adapt to.

Many who once were immersed in the regular hustle and bustle of the working individual are now expected to telework (work from home) and be productive, available, and efficient in their performance. For many the ability to work from the comfort of their home works well for them, but many are still struggling to adjust.

Additionally, parents with school age children who are now expected to homeschool children are burdened with sustaining a home, working, being a teacher, and attempting to maintain their mental wellbeing all at the same time. Just typing all these complex responsibilities is overwhelming in and of itself.

This document will provide helpful tools and information for maintaining mental wellness as we attempt to be the teacher, professional, and provider.

### What Works

**Create a Schedule:** Creating a schedule helps you to outline what the day should look like. The creation of a schedule will help you know how to navigate workday around the needs of children, pets, or housemates. For example: If your child naps between noon and 2pm, that would be a good time to schedule meetings or phone calls.

Currently the expectation of working 9-5 is not realistic or fair. You're still working and doing an amazing job. You are no longer confined to an office and a desk; you are now likely finding new ways of producing such as intermittently doing work throughout the day.

**Be Flexible:** Maintaining your schedule creates structure and consistency as well as expectations. While doing this embrace flexibility; being flexible is understanding that sometimes things do not go as planned and we must adapt. Every day will not be the same even if we have created a schedule. Respect routine, but be open to change.

**Create Space:** Create designated areas, if possible, for teleworking as well as for your child(ren)'s learning area. Having designated spaces can improve the ability to focus and will help with separating work/school life from home life.

**Connect with Your Child(ren):** Practice empathy; children are adjusting just as well as adults and they may be experiencing distress as a result. Consider their experience; each child is an individual and needs different things. What interests one may not interest the other. Keep this in mind as a child's individuality impacts their learning style, attention span, and their ability to adapt. Examples include:

- Encourage your kids to talk to friends or family members on the phone.
- Help students plan some virtual playdates to distract them from their worries.
  - Apps you can also use: Marco Polo, House Party, Netflix Party
- Recommend or include in lesson plans and packets some [fun, free activities that kids can do at home](#).
- Try your best to avoid watching the news in front of children (as that can be upsetting), keep as much of a regular family routine as possible, and plan activities such as going for walks or hikes or playing board or video games together.

Here are some resources for supporting you and your family:

1. [National Alliance for Mental Health](#): This site includes resources on general mental health.
  - In specific counties there are family support groups available on the website.
2. [BIPOC Therapists Nationally](#): You're also able to search for therapists within in your health insurance network if that's most useful and search based on the modality of work (marriage, family counseling, etc.)
3. [How to talk to kids about Coronavirus](#)

**Screen Time is Okay:** I know! I know! Given the times and the juggling of so many things; allowing screen time to occupy the little ones is okay, at times. Remember we are making space for nuisances during our new normal.

**Communicate:** Communicate your needs to your spouse/partner or family. Practice openly communicating with your children. Communicate with your supervisor and keep them updated about what is working, what is not, and what support you need. This is also helpful in clarifying what is expected of you.

**Connect with Teachers:** Connect with your child(ren)'s teachers to identify their expectations as well as to address any questions or concerns you may have. For instance, many parents have never used Google classroom and need additional support. Teachers can be a great resource.

**Practice Self-Compassion:** Practice extending yourself grace multiple times throughout the day. You are doing the best that you can with what you can. Learning to not judge yourself



for not having enough time, energy, or information will help to decrease negative self-talk and judgement. Finding an encouraging quote or mantra can be helpful.

**Socialize:** During this time feelings of isolation and loneliness can be overwhelming. Finding ways to engage with others without risking your health and wellbeing is important. While some can choose to detox from social media, social media could be a way of connecting with others. Other things such as attending virtual events, skyping, video chatting, calling, texting can be used to substitute face to face interactions. People are even doing drive-by visits to remain connected. Connecting with your community can be a source of strength and empowerment.

**Take Time-Off:** Remember to take sick, bereavement, or vacation leave when you need to tend to your health or the health and wellbeing of a loved one. We are not just experiencing COVID-19 from a distance; it is impacting many of us up close and personally. When you are not feeling well mentally and/or physically taking time away is necessary. In doing so, remember to resist those feelings of guilt and anxiety associated with having to halt work. It will be there when you return.

**Start a Support Group within Your Community:** It is important to rally together and share information, thoughts, feelings, ideas, and resources. While we are practicing physically distancing, social connectedness is vital. There are many platforms that enable us to connect virtually with one another.

### Take Care of Yourself

- Be real about what you are feeling
- Set aside time for you
- Create time for you and your spouse/partner
- Create time for family
- Do something you enjoy
- Tap into your spirituality
- Do a physical activity
- Go outside
- Explore virtual ways of connecting with a professional (life coach, therapist, peer support, etc.)
- Practice mindfulness/meditation (Apps: Mindspace, Liberate, Dharmaseed, Calm, Insight timer, Stop, Breath, Think, etc.)

### What does NOT work

**Avoiding Feelings:** Feelings are okay! Practicing emotional intelligence enables us to be aware of what we are feeling; to manage what we are feeling; and to express our emotions in a healthy manner.



Good questions to consider: What am I feeling? Can I identify what caused this feeling? How do I feel about this emotion? How can I express what I am feeling? What coping strategies can I use to deal with this?

**Needing to Be in Control:** Many people thrive when they are in control, but COVID-19 has presented us with many things that we cannot control. Possessing control in what was once our normal is a lot different currently. Our children are not robots, and neither are we; having playtime at 1pm instead of 3pm will not cause anyone harm. Acknowledging and accepting our powerlessness takes the pressure off. Sometimes, just going with the flow is helpful.

**Beating Yourself Up:** Do NOT beat yourself up; children's lessons and curriculum look a lot different than what you may have been taught in school. This can be intimidating and embarrassing. Remember, times have changed, and your best is all you can do. Also, this is a great opportunity to ask your child(ren) what they know and understand about the subject matter. Additionally, do NOT beat yourself up for producing differently than when you were going to an office daily. Be kind and mindful of the messages you give yourself.

**Full Steam Ahead:** Stop! Take time to breath and step away. Just as those 15-minute breaks are needed when in the office; taking breaks many times throughout the day is essential to your mental wellness while teleworking. This is also important for children as well; they are experiencing feelings of worry, fear, and being overwhelmed also.

## We Can Do This!

It is vital that we acknowledge that these circumstances are not ideal nor are they regular work from home circumstances. The reality is that we are all new to this; we have never had to navigate the stress of a global pandemic while attempting to maintain life as we know it. You are not alone; millions of other individuals around the world are trying to figure it out just as you are. It is going to take all of us working together in a unified way to improve our quality of life amid the COVID-19 pandemic we are experiencing.

## Resources

**Call to Safety:** If you are an adult and worried about your safety at home, 888-235-5333. Interpretation line available.

**Proyecto Unica:** Spanish version of Call to Safety, 503-232-4448

**DHS (Oregon Department of Human Services) Hotline:** If you are worried about the safety of a child, 855-503-7233. Interpretation services available.



**Multnomah County Crisis Services:** Call Center/Crisis Line, 503-988-4888 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Interpretation services available.

**Kaiser Crisis Line:** Available if you have Kaiser insurance, 503-331-6425

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** English, 800-273-8255; Spanish, 800-628-9454 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Interpretation services available.

**Oregon Youth Line:** For youth to connect with other youth, text "Teen2Teen" to 839863 to instantly text with another person. Interpretation services available.

**Trevor Project:** Supporting LGBTQiA+ youth. Text "START" to 678678 or call TrevorLifeLine, 1-866-488-7386

**Trans Lifeline:** Supporting trans community members, call 877-565-8860

**The Senior Loneliness Line:** (503) 200-1633 or 800-282-7035

**EAP** (resource for City of Portland employees): 1-800-433-2320 or 503-980-1777

