

Coronavirus Q&A: Education with Jilly Davis

How can families manage their child's refusal around school work at home

Important to remember anxiety and the ability to cope with demands changes every day, sometimes hour to hour (especially if they've seen or heard information about coronavirus on the media). Chances are their anxieties have increased and so other difficulties may be heightened, such as sensory issues. Don't push if seem over-whelmed.

The key is, you know you child and their "norm" so try to be in tune with them in terms of when they appear to be struggling more and when they are more able. This may look slightly different at the moment.

Priority has be balancing their emotional well-being against the pressure of school work. Encourage them to talk about feelings.

Depending on age/cognitive ability – keep them up to date with what is happening in the world.

Also try keep on top of your personal emotions (easy to say but so hard).

Some ideas

- Work presentation options
- Flexibility/choice visuals
- Sensory heightened – adjust accordingly
- Empathy about the amount of work
- Set realistic expectations
- Reduce social environment
- Reduce everyday demands
- Allow for more down time / interest focus

Younger Children

- Think about choice/novelty/creativity
- Can you make the work fit their interest/strengths?
- Role play – swop roles/use favourite toy
- Set up a classroom in the house which they are responsible for
- Can the work be presented in different formats each day and recorded in different ways with them having a choice/novelty/fun element?
- Could they set you some work?
- May need to try and avoid the word 'work' - call it "mission" or "game"
- Reduce demands and perceived expectation, especially around personal hygiene

How to manage build-up of work

Balancing act

Empathy

Speak to the school in terms prioritising deadlines / time scales / alternative methods of recording / any dispensation

Consider any sensory issues

More down time/ more focus on strengths/interests

Reduce household expectations regarding social with the family/personal hygiene etc.

Visual clarification – but moveable

Start the day with a strength/preferred work content

Vary how work delivered – can you use you tube/recording software?

Might need to eat more 'favoured foods' and graze rather than eat with family

When anxiety is higher more processing time is needed.

How can families juggle the differing needs of multiple children, differing ages and differing needs and between PDA and their siblings?

Probably already micro – managing your family

Could you have a daily family meeting work so they are involved in the days' decisions and how their day looks?

Would the older children be prepared to help younger or less able brothers/ sisters and then they get some positive reinforcement, not as 'waving a carrot on a stick' or bribe but as a natural consequence of helping you out?

Ask for their help as you feel tired, don't know how to do the work

Are you children aware of each of their strengths, difficulties? Would this help them to understand each other problems and difficulties?

Use natural consequences