

Balancing work and family in a time of crisis

Our lives are structured by routine. That routine has no doubt been affected by the rapid spread of COVID-19. These effects will be felt differently by different people. Some are home and out of work, left with unknowns about their finances. Others are now working from home, or working more, juggling business and family priorities.

Whatever your situation, you're not alone. It helps to know that others are going through something similar. It helps even more to know how to respond to this new situation. How can we find balance? How can we manage expectations? How can we take care of our own needs when there seems to be so much competing for our attention? We've pulled together a short list of small items that give you a place to start.

Communicate early. When our expectations differ from those around us, we often default to the fight or flight mode.¹ Things get even more complicated when the situation is stressful. Right now, it all feels stressful. Have honest conversations with your family and your co-workers. Try to understand what they need from you and then set clear expectations for your time, energy and attention. Remember, this is probably an unusual situation for everyone.

Plan out your days. After you've talked with your family and colleagues, you are better prepared to set a realistic schedule. You're human, not a superhero. Share the schedule that you've created with their input, in writing, if possible. Visual or written reminders are important, things like an email to colleagues, a written schedule on the refrigerator, or a shared calendar with a partner.

Take time for yourself. When demands on your time shift, it's important to reserve a little time for yourself. Incorporate time specifically for things you enjoy like reading, listening to music, exercising or cooking. Take time to step outside for some fresh air. Don't be afraid to get creative and try new things.

You can still connect. The need for social distancing works against our human desire for connection. We can avoid some of the forced isolation by reaching out in different ways. Try a video call with family across the country or a friend down the street. The shared situation can be the source of a new and different connection.

Give yourself (and others) an extra ounce of grace. As we adjust to changing routines, there are sure to be bumps along the way. Try to be flexible and open to revisiting the expectations you had set with family, co-workers and friends. The uniqueness of the experience means there is no roadmap for this journey.

We encourage you to try out the ideas above as you navigate the days ahead. See what works for you. Caring for your family, work, *and yourself* are all important, and remember there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution.

[For more ways to manage stress, visit <http://www.learntolive.com/partners>. You and your family members (13 and older) can take a confidential assessment, start a self-paced program, and even connect with a Learn to Live Coach.]

Warmly,
The Learn to Live Team



¹<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/communication-success/201205/are-you-poor-communicator-how-improve>