

SEVEN LOCKDOWN TIPS FOR PARENTS ON THE DAY SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE GONE BACK

1. **A schedule:** Bedtime, waking-up time and meal times are the “backbone” of the daily structure, regardless of age. In between those points, “there should be time for playing and learning”. Bush said: “If we plan and schedule, it gives our days during lockdown structure and purpose.” This should include a differentiation between weekdays and weekends.

2. **Online edutainment:** Bush said parents could have some relief if children do online learning. There are many good and entertaining resources which are also educational. Online activities for children did not always have to be “frivolous”.

3. **Offline stimulation:** Bush said parents could introduce their children to paper-based games “that need a bit of brain power”. Examples included Sudoku and word searches. “There are thinking activities that are fun for children but are also in line with academics and can keep brains stimulated.”

4. **Playing alone versus playing with parents:** Bush suggested “doing an inventory of the toys and games at your disposal in the house, then dividing them up into those you do together [parents and child/children], and those they can do separately [child/children alone]”. She said children could become highly engaged while playing with toys they had “already mastered”. She also suggested making sure some of these activities were purely creative, such as painting, colouring and building small constructions.

5. **Passing on life skills:** The time saved by not commuting could be turned into quality time that focuses on life skills, such as the chores many children never help with. “Engage children in doing chores like emptying the dishwasher, sweeping the floors, helping with food preparation. Chores are the glue that keeps families together. All these build confidence and competence and independence - all important things because one day we must let our children go,” said Bush.

6. **Creating and documenting new memories:** Bush suggested framing the lockdown as “an unusual adventure” with our children, and encouraging them to document it through journals and photography. “Make sure our children come through this stronger and more connected,” she said.

7. **Flexible mindset:** “There is no guarantee we won’t get a longer lockdown. If we set all our sights on freedom at the end of 21 days, we will be in psychological and emotional trouble if it is extended,” said Bush. “Let’s start talking about our first period of lockdown. I think we can have a lot of fun that creates memories, but this may be a dress rehearsal for a lengthened period.”

