

# HURUPAKI PRIMARY SCHOOL

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24 March 2020

Dear parents and caregivers

During this lockdown, you might be inclined to create a minute by minute schedule for your children. You have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done! But here's the thing...

Our children are just as scared as we are right now. They not only hear everything that is going on around them, but the children feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off school for weeks sounds awesome, they are probably picturing a fun time like the summer holidays, not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you may see an increase in behaviour with your children. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally – it may happen. You might see more meltdowns, tantrums and oppositional behaviour in the coming weeks. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What children need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be okay. And that might mean that you tear up your perfect schedule and play with your children a bit more. Play outside and go on walks. Bake cookies and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo or a museum. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single child is in this boat and they will all be okay. When we are back in the classroom, we will meet them where they are. Teachers are experts at this! Don't pick fights with your children because they don't want to be doing maths. Don't scream at them for not following the schedule. Don't mandate 2 hours of learning time if they are resisting it.

If we can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of all of this, your children's mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those weeks is long gone. So keep that in mind, every single day.

Teachers will be unavailable during the holiday period, which is 30th March-14<sup>th</sup> April inclusive. You can expect to receive an email from teachers after this.

Neuroscience educator Nathan Wallis said caregivers need to have realistic expectations of themselves as parents as they enter a stressful time and try to juggle two jobs – parent and teacher. He warns against falling into the trap of letting children be online all day. Instead, aim for a balanced curriculum encouraging them to have free play, to play outside and to let them get bored, because it leads to creativity. "Getting bored and making a hut is every bit as important as doing their maths homework on their computer."

At home, six hours of teaching could be done in just over an hour with the parent being actively involved. Another hour could be supported learning, where the parent does their own work alongside them. Remember, children aged 7 and under learn just as much through child-led play.

Keep safe, be kind, stay calm.

Ngā mihi nui

Rob Posthumus and Shelley Muston