

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): The importance of routines & rituals

## TIP SHEET

**As school holidays come to an end and we go back into school terms, the importance of routines and rituals in the family household during isolation is increased.**

With our everyday routines and rituals being swept away by COVID-19, you can feel like a rug has been pulled out from under you. It can leave you with a sense of fear and uncertainty, leading to stress and anxiety.

Routines are important for both adults and children – they help us to relax and provide us with a sense of security, control and stability, by creating a feeling of order in the chaos of everyday life. Rituals also give us a sense of belonging – to family and community.

Children in particular have little control over their world, so they count on consistent routines to provide them with security and a sense of normalcy.



Below is some information and tips that may help you develop and implement routines and rituals into your life during COVID-19.

### What are routines?

Routines are our usual ways of doing things – they are predictable and regular, and allow us to do regular everyday activities without too much thinking.

For example, the routines of getting ready for school or work, or sitting at the same seat at the dinner table.

Routines also create and enforce boundaries between work and home, between our private and professional lives – never more important than now when many are working from home.

### What are rituals?

Rituals are similar, but have more emotional meaning attached to them. They convey to children that they are part of a family so can be a valuable time to foster a sense of family identity.

They can include things like bedtime stories, family meal times or leisure activities such as fishing, cycling and playing board games.

### How to integrate routines and rituals into your everyday life during isolation

- **Establish and stick to routines that are within your control**  
Set specific times for your routine, such as getting up at the same time every day, exercising at the same time every day, eating meals or making a regular time to video catch-up with your workmates. If you are now working from home, try to work out what part of your day and routine were most enjoyable for you and figure out how you can maintain it in your new situation.
- **Create boundaries between 'work' and 'home'**  
Establish a ritual that signals you are now 'at work' and one that indicates that you are now 'at home', so you can maintain healthy work/home boundaries.
- **Think about what you can control**  
Use your routines to help you take charge of these controllable elements. Break your day down into small, achievable tasks.
- **Mix up the weekly routine**  
If you can keep your days a little different, they won't just merge together. This helps alleviate boredom and monotony and gives everyone something to look forward to.

- **Don't give up on important events**  
Use technology to keep family traditions alive, e.g. 'virtual' birthday parties (and not just for the children). Rituals like this will make these experiences memorable.
- **Maintain couple time**  
Date nights may have no longer be possible, but it's essential to maintain couple time. Schedule a date night where you order in a special meal after the children are in bed.
- **Don't over-structure the day daily routine.**  
Allow some free time just to relax.
- **Remember, you are not alone**  
If a lack of routine leaves you feeling overwhelmed by uncertainty, don't forget that you are not alone – many people are experiencing this same feeling. Talk to others about your feelings and reach out for help if necessary.
- **Try to enjoy this change to routines**  
Instead of hurrying your children out of the door to after-school activities, use that time to reconnect by playing games, talking, relaxing, or engaging in other enjoyable activities. It can be difficult to embrace a slower pace of life, but when you do, it can also be life changing for you and your family.



## Routines for children

- **Create a timetable**  
It can help to set regular times for school work, exercise, meals and catching up with their friends in a virtual manner.
- **Wearing uniforms**  
For some children, wearing their uniform during 'school time' can help them focus on their school work.
- **Involve older children and teenagers in discussing and developing a routine**  
By making them feel like they have been part of the decision making process, they are more likely to cooperate.
- **Make a routine chart**  
Young children may benefit from having a chart made with pictures (you may like to create this together) to help them follow the new routine. Older children could create a schedule that builds on their school day program.
- **Maintain or establish a bedtime routine**  
This can involve stories and sharing about the day's activities. Use this time to check in with younger children and how they are feeling.
- **Schedule family time**  
A regular daily outdoor family activity such as playing soccer or going for a walk, or a daily board game can be something they look forward to.
- **Don't forget to praise your children**  
Embracing change is a milestone and huge accomplishment for a child. Praise them when you noticed they have been flexible, e.g. "I was proud of you when you\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for being so flexible."
- **Schedule time for different kinds of play**  
This can include outside play, quiet play, art & craft, digital play. Make sure everyone goes outside every day.
- **Share out chores when everyone is at home**  
This will help the household to get through tasks fairly and allocate tasks so everyone has a role and some level of responsibility.
- **Find a calming activity that your older children enjoy**  
Use this to check in with them. This might be a regular walk after dinner or playing a card game.
- **Ensure there are things scheduled each day that your child enjoys.**  
This might include screen time, cooking, craft.
- **Help them stay connected to their friends**  
One of the most difficult things for children during this time is not being able to see friends and family. Ensure you create a routine around different ways to

stay connected. If you haven't already done so, set up video chats on platforms such as Zoom and Facetime.

- **Have shared family meal times**

Use this time for bonding and checking in with each other. If some family members are not present, set up the screen so you can 'eat together'.

- **Try to also remain flexible**

At the moment, it is not possible to predict what will happen next, so being flexible is important. Talk with your children about why things are different now, and let them know that it won't always be this way. Give them as much notice as possible about changes to routines.



## Seeking Help

If you are feeling low in your mood, and you can't shake it off after several days in a row, please seek help.

Relationships Australia WA is continuing to deliver support services for people across Western Australia during this unprecedented and difficult time and are providing support services over the telephone, video conferencing or online to clients.

If you or your family could use a little help, we offer many services and courses that are available to

everyone. Our services are available to people of all cultural backgrounds, family structure, gender and sexual orientation.

**Please call us on 1300 364 277 to let us know how we can support you and your family.**

**You can find out more about the range of support services we offer by visiting our website [www.relationshipswa.org.au](http://www.relationshipswa.org.au).**

If you need immediate support, please contact:

Lifeline on 13 11 14

Suicide Line on 1300 651 251

Mensline on 1300 78 99 78

Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800