



With last week's news that all schools will be closed for the remainder of the year, I imagine a lot of families are feeling a little heavy-hearted right now. I know my family is. Whether your children are younger or teenagers—for many of them—knowing that they will not step foot back into school, their classroom or see their friends for the remainder of the school year is quite a blow.

What I've come to realize (better late than never!) is that we're in a marathon, not a sprint. This new uncertain, ever-changing "normal" is going to be around for a while. And for me, this realization has had a silver lining: the undeniable realization of how important my patience, empathy and flexibility are right now. Not only with my children, but with myself as a parent, too.

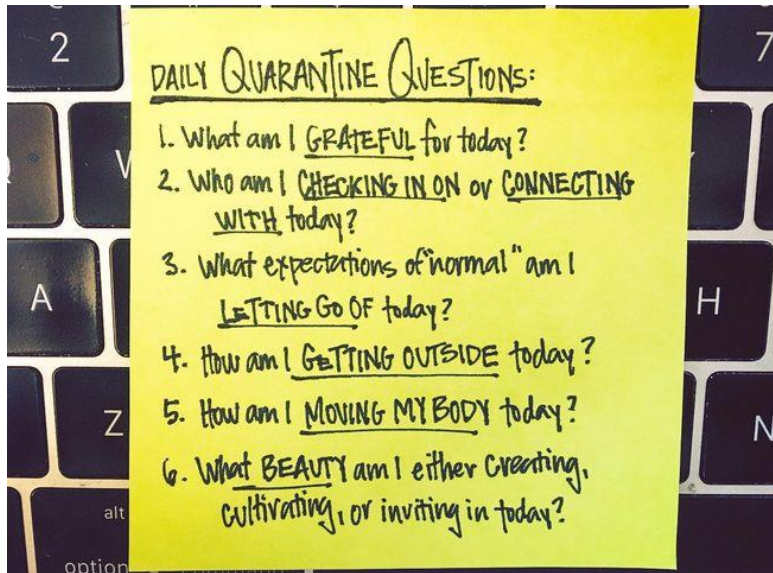
No two children or two families are the same. You may notice that your child who once struggled in school academically or socially, may be doing well and adjusting to homeschooling. Or you may notice that a well performing student of yours is now struggling more than normal. That's the case with my 8-year-old daughter. You may find yourself being creative to get their work done, playing "school" with your child while creating a new space in your home. My daughter has taken to using a big medicine ball at the table to sit on which allows her some bouncing while she's completing her work.

I'll be honest. My quarantine game started out pretty strong. We had a structured daily schedule that changed by the hour. That quickly went out the window! We've evolved into something that fits more with the fluidity of this situation, our emotions and the need to focus on our mental health. We still have time for academics, exercise, chore and quiet time (reading, napping, puzzles, etc.), but now I'm giving my girls the choice as to when they complete each task. CHOICE is a powerful parenting tool. You as a parent still have control of what those choices are, but your child also feels empowered to choose for themselves. This can often lead to increased compliance with requests.

As much as possible, you do want to try to stick to daily routines regarding wake-up times, meals, naps, and bedtimes as usual. Of course, schoolwork is a priority also. For my 11-year-old

daughter, she's happy completing it first thing in the morning and having the rest of her day free. My youngest daughter, meanwhile, has been getting frustrated easily and needs my help, so we've split up academic time to 1 hour in the AM and 1 hour in the afternoon. And now at the end of the day when all our responsibilities are taken care of, we ask ourselves some of these quarantine questions.

This is an evolving new normal for all of us. Please don't forget to give yourself grace as you navigate your day.



Check out these infographics with ideas on choice as a parenting tool and positive strategies for families.

<https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/limited-choices>

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Family-Strategies_Infographic.pdf

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Family-Strategies_Infographic_SP.pdf

Stay strong & stay healthy.