



Working at Home during the Coronavirus Crisis with Kids Underfoot? Here are 9 Ways to Help you Adjust.

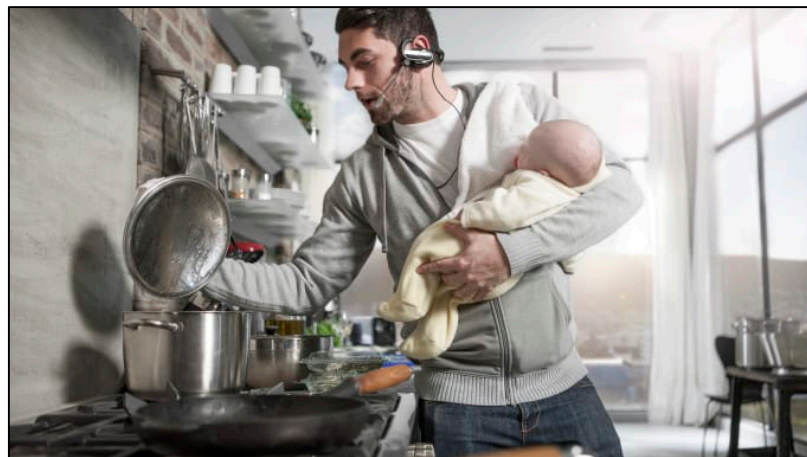
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies are sending their employees home to work, while schools and day cares are also closing nationwide. For many parents, this means working from home while their children are also present. “Whether you’ve worked from home for years or if you’re completely new to remote work, these circumstances are incredibly challenging,” said Sara Sutton, founder and CEO of *FlexJobs*.

To help working parents adjust to these new and unusual conditions, FlexJobs has highlighted 9 tips for parents working at home with children during emergencies.

1. *Be upfront about expectations.* It’s important to proactively communicate with your employer that your children are at home so they are aware that you cannot guarantee your work or work calls will be interruption-free. This applies to children as well: Explain to them that working from home means you really are trying to do work. While it may seem like a regular weekend or a vacation day because you are all at home, these are highly unusual circumstances.

2. *Set up virtual babysitters.*

Reach out to friends, aunts, uncles, grandparents, babysitters, teachers. These individuals are amazing resources, because you can use them to arrange virtual playdates for your kids. They can talk, read, play games, sing, do dances and much more, all online.



3. *Plan activities that don’t need supervision.* Different activities apply to different age groups, of course, depending on your schedule and the age of your children. While babies will give you a breather during nap times, you can rely on swings and bouncy chairs or put on music or Baby Einstein. Create activity boxes that contain games and puzzles that require minimal adult supervision for toddlers and grade-schoolers. They can also be kept busy with trustworthy apps and their favorite shows. Have a backup activity jar ready to go for when these activities become boring. Older kids will most likely be busy with online schooling.



- 4. *Prioritize your schedule.*** Aim to schedule your most engaging/reliable activities for the kids to be on their own during the time you need to be most productive.
- 5. *Split the work.*** If you have a partner, and if your work allows, you may consider taking shifts. For instance, one person watches the kids in the morning while the other works, and vice versa in the afternoon. This can better guarantee at least some hours where your focus is purely on work.
- 6. *Reward good behavior.*** Working from home with kids in an emergency means maintaining harmony however possible, and this includes setting up a reward system for them when they follow directions.
- 7. *Take mini breaks.*** Consider temporarily changing your style of working. Instead of tackling a project for three hours, break up the day more to give your children the attention they need. Honor the fact that their attention spans are short, so your work will likely need to be done in chunks. Expect that you may need to continue working after they've gone to bed or wake up earlier in the morning to get more uninterrupted hours in.
- 8. *Stress less about screen time.*** Under normal conditions, many parents limit screen time. It is worth considering adding to their daily screen time allotment to buy you more work time. Just explain to your children, though, that it is a temporary adjustment.
- 9. *Get creative with office space.*** Try to find a space with a door that can be closed. Creating physical boundaries can help reinforce the message that you need to be working. Anyplace in the house with internet access can act as an office during an emergency, especially for when you have to ensure calls are uninterrupted.