

Wellness Wednesday



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7 Ways To Get Kids To Actually Pay Attention During Remote Learning

Because my child alternates between asking when it's over and falling out of his chair.

My 5-year-old had his first remote classes of the fall this week. He was in public pre-K when COVID-19 hit last spring, and his teachers tried some online learning, but it was ... not great. Basically, 18 out-of-frame heads squirming in unison while their wonderful, patient teachers reminded their parents to kindly mute.

So I had low (like, low) expectations for how my kiddo's remote learning sessions would go this fall. Even then, it was startling to re-witness just how tough this way of learning is for my kid. He fidgets. He asks repeatedly when it's over. He gets up to check what his little brother is up to. And I'm certainly not alone.



"Some kids are transitioning to this new learning better and easier than other kids," said Megan Allen, 2010 Florida Teacher of the Year and founder of Tailored Learning Supports for Families. "Recognize that paying attention online might be harder for some kids. And that's OK! Some kids need more strategies."

With that in mind, here are seven ways to try to get all kids — but especially young learners — to pay attention during remote learning. Good luck to us all!

1. Know what it means to actually "pay attention."

Before parents (like me!) start fretting too much about whether our kids are paying attention (still me!), teachers say it's important to clear up expectations.

"Break down what it means to pay attention. We say the phrase, but what does it mean? How does one 'pay attention' when they're 7?" said Allen. "Sometimes we say things as adults that don't translate to kids. This is one of them."

Talk with your kid about what "paying attention" actually means, so you're both clear. Like: Are your listening ears on? Are your eyes on whoever is speaking? Are you talking out of turn? Is your brain following what's happening? It's not necessarily: Are you sitting perfectly still without making a peep and politely raising your hand to answer every single question?

2. Make a dedicated, consistent learning space for them.

This one can be hard for families without a ton of space. I, for example, have two adults and two kids crammed into a teeny walk-up apartment. But it really is important, experts say.

"It doesn't matter if it's the kitchen, living room or basement, but it should be free of distractions such as phones and TV, and most importantly it should be consistent," said Sarah Brown Wessling, 2010 National Teacher of the Year and Johnston High School English teacher who has been working with Prezi, a video communications company, to help teachers and students adjust to distance learning. "Consistency is key for at-home learning because it signals to your child that it's time to learn and be engaged."

3. Let them fidget.

When I see my son squirm, my instinct is to assume he's lost all interest. Which, to be fair, is sometimes true. But teachers know that sometimes kids just really need movement in order to tune in.

"Just like in school, some learners need to stand or fidget or move in order to pay attention," Wessling said. "If this is your child, consider elevating your child's screen onto a counter or on a stack of books so they can stand. I'm also a big fan of black binder clips for fidgeting."

"For many of us, we can pay attention better when we are rubbing a piece of sandpaper in our pocket, playing with a rubber band ... moving our hands or feet," echoed Allen. "The good ol' bungee cord around the bottom of the chair is a fun one for feet movement." Maybe this is the year of the fidget spinner comeback?

4. Find the best placement... for you.

It can be particularly hard as a parent of a young remote learner to know where you're actually supposed to be. If I'm not there to oversee a live class call or start a taped one, my son is completely lost. Which makes sense. He's 5.

But when I hang around too close, I know I'm more of a distraction. He defers to me, not his teacher. And I suspect he's often self-conscious.

Wessling urged parents to play around with finding the right balance. "Be aware of your proximity," she said. "Some children will work better when you are close, but not hovering. Others will work better with more independence and prefer an occasional check-in. What works for your child is the right thing to do."

5. Work in movement breaks. Lots of them.

"Kids (and adults) need to move while in front of the camera or computer!" Allen urged. "Maybe you and your kiddo have a secret signal, and you let the teacher in on it. At that signal, your kiddo can get up and move."

You can keep it really simple and just have them get up and stretch or walk around for a few seconds. Or if you feel so inclined, you can take it up a notch. For example, Allen likes the idea of an activity board you can point to a few options on. Like: Two star jumps! One lunge! A quick yoga pose! And then they get back to work.

6. Talk to your kid's teacher — more than ever before.

Yes, teachers are slammed right now trying to figure out this “new normal.” But helping them get to know your child — and cementing the idea that you’re going to really tackle remote learning as a team — can go a long way in making sure online learning clicks. “Advocate for your kid. Speak up, and early,” Allen said. “Open those lines of communication so you all can figure out this new landscape together.”

Tell your child's teacher early on if there's anything that's not working. And let them know when something is. Also, be patient. Have grace and compassion with teachers now more than ever, Allen urged. (Here are a few more practical ways to support teachers in this crazy, unprecedented year.)



7. Don't discipline them.

It can be pull-your-hair-out hard to watch your child struggle with online learning. We all want this to work. But don't discipline your kid if they're struggling.

“Avoid attaching immediate consequences to not paying attention. Especially early on in this experience, we don't want our children to associate negativity with the desired behavior,” Wessling said. “Instead, affirm their good choices, model the behavior you'd most like to see, praise the small things and keep nudging them towards higher expectations.”

Also remember, your child's teacher is actually their teacher. (Obvious, but easy to forget!) Lean on them and their accumulated wisdom to help you all get through this, as a team.



SPICY PORK BRUSSELS BOWLS



280.5 Calories | PREP TIME: 5 mins | COOK TIME: 25 mins | TOTAL TIME: 30 mins
YIELD: 4 Servings | COURSE: Dinner, Lunch, Meal Prep | CUISINE: American

INGREDIENTS

olive oil spray
1 pound 90% lean ground pork, or swap it for a meatless ground meat option
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon smoky paprika
2 teaspoons ancho chili powder
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
6 cups shredded brussels sprouts
1/4 cup chopped onion
4 large eggs

Spicy Pork Brussels Bowls are a delicious low-carb meal, made with shredded brussels sprouts as the base, smoky ground pork, and an egg on top!

TIPS:

CAN YOU PUT BRUSSELS SPROUTS IN A FOOD PROCESSOR?

Yes, putting brussels sprouts in your food processor is an excellent way to save time shredding sprouts. Just attach the slicing blade, and they'll be ready in no time!

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 1/2 cups, Calories: 280.5 kcal, Carbohydrates: 15.5 g, Protein: 35 g, Fat: 10 g, Saturated Fat: 3.5 g, Cholesterol: 252.5 mg, Sodium: 474 mg, Fiber: 6 g, Sugar: 3.5 g
Source: Skinnytaste.com



INSTRUCTIONS

How to make:

Heat a large cast iron or heavy nonstick skillet over medium heat, spray with oil and cook the meat, breaking it up in small pieces.

Combine spices in a small bowl.

Add garlic, season with spices and vinegar and cook until browned and no longer pink in the middle, 8 to 10 minutes.

Set aside on a plate.

Add the brussels and onions to the skillet and cook over high heat, stirring occasionally until the brussels start to brown and are tender crisp, 6 to 7 minutes.

Return the pork to the skillet and mix everything together 1 to 2 minutes.

Heat a nonstick skillet and spray with oil, when hot cook the eggs, covered until the whites are just set and the yolks are still runny, 2 to 3 minutes.

Swap your protein: Substitute the pork for any ground meat you wish. Try it with lamb, chicken, turkey, beef, or go meatless with Impossible Burger or Beyond Meat.

Add a grain: If you'd like to get more portions out of this bowl recipe, serve it over brown rice or quinoa to make it even more filling.

To meal prep: Divide into four meal prep containers. Cover and refrigerate up to four days. To heat, microwave in 30-second intervals until heated through.

How to freeze: Freeze covered for up to three months without the egg. To reheat, transfer to the refrigerator or reheat from frozen in 30-second intervals until heated through.

FEATURED EXERCISE

Dumbbell Squat Thrust



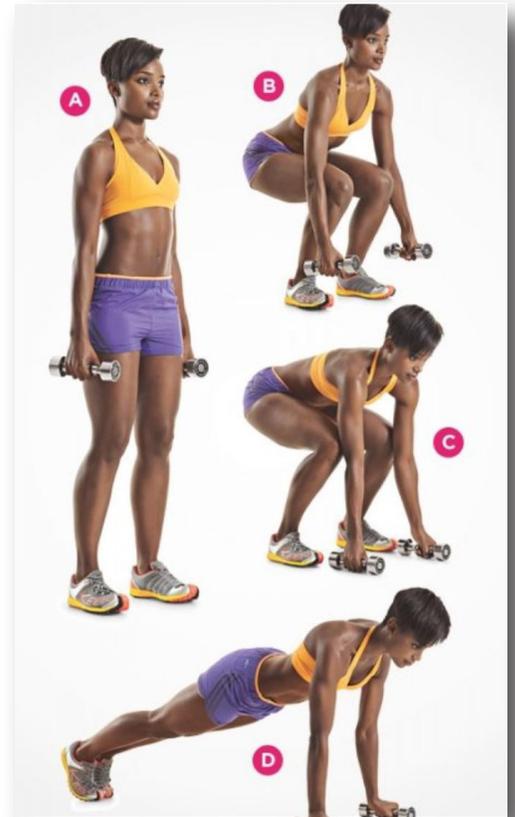
Grab your Dumbbells, Let's Get to Work!

(A) Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your arms at your sides holding a pair of dumbbells.

(B) Push your hips back, bend your knees, and lower your body as deep as you can into a squat.

(C) Place the dumbbells on the floor, then kick your legs backward into a pushup position.

(D) Kick your legs back to the squat position. Stand up and jump. That's 1 rep.



10 Abs Exercises Better Than Crunches

<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/a19971607/abs-exercise>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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**SUCCESS ISN'T
OVERNIGHT. IT'S
WHEN EVERY DAY
YOU GET A LITTLE
BETTER THAN
BEFORE. IT ADDS
UP.**

- Dwayne Johnson