



# SIBUZ information post extra

## When school takes place at home – tips for families

### Dear Parents and Guardians,

Due to the measures to protect against further infections, the schools have been closed and schooling has been moved to the home. This extraordinary situation also offers you as a family the chance to focus on things which there is little time for in everyday life. You can use this time to become closer as a family. Perhaps you can revive old rituals or introduce new ones, such as cooking and talking together, going for walks, playing games or just being together.

As parents you can neither replace school lessons nor take on the role of the teacher. Your child will be given the subject-based tasks by the school. Your task will be to support and motivate your child. We have put together some tips and suggestions for you to help you structure the coming weeks in a positive way.

### How should I organise learning at home?

Having to complete a mountain of tasks on your own is never easy. We provide you with tips on how you can help your child to complete the tasks he or she receives from school at home in the coming weeks:

- *Get an overview:* together with your child, look through all the things that need to be done and plan the week together. Alongside school tasks, this also includes household duties.
- *Clarify expectations and prioritise tasks:* tell your child honestly what you expect from him or her and also ask what is important for him or her in the next few weeks without school. Some things will not be negotiable, but there are other things that your child can decide for him/herself depending on his or her age (e.g. which task to start with or whether he or she prefers to do school work in the mornings or afternoons). Work out together which tasks are particularly important and definitely shouldn't be neglected.

- *Make a plan:* write in a weekly plan which **specific** tasks are to be completed when. In this way everyone can see what has been agreed. This prevents misunderstandings and arguments.
- With a *task list for each day* (3-5 tasks) you can divide the “big mountain” into small daily steps, making it more manageable and less overwhelming for your child. Crossing out completed tasks helps your child and motivates him/her.
- *Organise the workplace:* make sure your child has a fixed place for his or her schoolwork where he or she is not distracted. Quiet music in the background is not necessarily disturbing, but moving pictures (television, computer) and speech (radio play) distract attention.
- *Working time and breaks:* you or your child can use a clock, timer or egg timer to limit work phases, e.g. to 30 minutes. Each time his or her concentration is interrupted (e.g. by incoming messages on a mobile phone), your child needs time to get back to a task. This slows him or her down. It is better to take a break after a concentrated work phase. Small children need a change or a break after 15 minutes.
- *What's done is done:* when the day's tasks are finished, your child has the rest of the day off. Give him or her this time and don't come back spontaneously with new tasks.

### How can I motivate my child to learn?

Motivation is the key factor for stimulating learning processes. A high level of self-motivation is conducive to mood, self-confidence and successful learning. But “external” motivation is also effective as long as learning is not felt to be forced. Strict external control not only makes your child feel tense and puts him or her in a bad mood, but also makes for less successful learning.

Here is some advice on how you can support your child's motivation to learn:

- Plan the learning time together with your child and let your child have a say. Give your child a vote of confidence.
- Agree realistic learning goals with your child and make it clear to your child that you believe he or she can achieve them. Encourage your child!
- Discuss with your child how to get help when difficulties arise.
- Make sure that your child is rewarded for achieving goals. However, the goal achieved and the type of reward should be in a good relationship to each other.
- Show your child that the learning content is meaningful and that you value your child's efforts to learn. Be a positive role model for your child.
- Your child's friends can also be invited to become learning mentors by telephone or video chat.
- Show an interest in your child's learning success, but avoid the "excessive" control described above.

### How can my child learn sustainably?

If you notice that your child learns complex things seemingly effortlessly in his or her free time, this unfortunately does not necessarily apply to school learning. School learning content does not always arouse a child's interest. The learning of school content is more successful if it is possible to select and organise the learning content appropriately and to embed it in the existing knowledge structure.

Learning techniques help in structuring, storing and networking the learning content. In general, the more sustainably new content is learned the better it can be combined with your child's previous knowledge. Different **learning techniques** are helpful depending on the learning goal and learning content:

- Underline or mark important points (e.g. in a text),
- Summarise contents independently (verbally or in writing),
- Explain it to others (e.g. in a learning partnership or to parents),
- Develop visual representations,
- Memorise by repeated reading aloud or reading together,
- Make notes or index cards (e.g. for vocabulary),
- Develop your own questions about the subject matter (e.g. a text),

- Formulate headings for sections (e.g. in a text),
- Construct application examples (e.g. from everyday life).

It is important for your child to recognise what it has already understood and what it has not yet understood. Therefore, try together to get an idea of how your child approaches a learning task. Every child already has experience with certain learning techniques. However, your experience with learning techniques can also be interesting for your child. Advise and encourage your child to review existing techniques and try out new ones.

### How should we structure the day as a family?

Your everyday family life is currently changing a lot due to the loss of your usual activities. This poses great challenges for self-organisation. In any case, it is important that you organise the day well:

- Try to maintain a daily routine, i.e. agree getting up times, stick to the usual rituals for breakfast.
- Plan meals together - if you work outside the home: prepare lunch for/with your child so that he or she is provided for throughout the day. Preparing meals together can be an enjoyable shared activity.
- Collect ideas about what to do in your free time. Remind yourself and your child what is fun (e.g. painting, crafting, playing games, making music).
- Whether fitness, yoga or other forms of exercise – you can do many things in your own living room. Take advantage of apps and videos to bring exercise and sports programmes into your home (e.g. from Alba-Berlin, see link box on last page). One key to success is having a fixed time of day. Don't try to do too much, and celebrate every success!
- Make agreements with your child on the subject of **media consumption**. What games and apps does your child use? Are there alternatives? Suggestion: watch films in the original version with subtitles (older children) or watch films together and talk about them (younger children). Limit the media time! Use blocks for devices and router if necessary.

Make sure that your child gets enough variety through exercise and contact with "real" people. Also recognise the opportunity provided by the media at this time, namely as an educational offer and a way to stay in contact with friends.

## When things get heated ... – how should I deal with conflicts?

You and your child are seeing more of each other now than usual. Conflicts can easily arise. You need to stay calm, take a deep breath and then look for solutions together. Here are a few tips to help you:

- Take your time and always settle a conflict calmly, not when you are annoyed.
- Sit together at a table and have a pen and paper in front of you in case you want to write something down or make an agreement together.
- Ask yourself in advance what it is about. Decide how much time you want to take for the discussion.
- Don't mix everything up, along the lines of: "And another thing I've always wanted to tell you...!" A conflict always arises when one person wants something different to another other person and nobody gives in.
- Talk about how you and your child see the situation. Stay friendly and affectionate.
- Both of you should formulate your interests, your needs and your wishes. Name the differences. There is nothing wrong with wanting different things.
- Look for a mutual solution, do not settle for anything else.
- If things escalate, stop the discussion and continue it later.
- If necessary, just say that you would like your child to suggest solutions and then be quiet and attentive.

If you and your child notice that conflicts are escalating and you feel increasingly angry and helpless, contact a family counselling centre, the Berliner Krisendienst (tel. 030-3906340) or phone the child emergency number (tel. 030-610061).

## Lockdown fatigue – what now?

When your familiar daily routines and activities no longer apply and all the family members are stuck in the flat for a long time, a feeling of boredom can arise at some point due to the monotony.

Boredom gives you the chance to interrupt your usual patterns of behaviour and to discover old or new capabilities within yourself. When your child receives less external stimulation, after a while he or she

starts to translate existing experiences and lessons learned into new actions in interaction with the environment. Your child needs time for this and you need patience! Children then invent creative new games, fantasise stories and experiment with what they find. In this way interests and talents can be discovered. One child starts sewing, another fills glasses with water and makes them chime, a magazine is used to make a puzzle or a new cake recipe is developed. And you can discover new sides to your child.

You also have the opportunity to rediscover your own creativity and playfulness by accompanying your child and engaging in his or her games. It can be exciting for your child to try out games from a time before computer games. How about writing a story together with pictures in the form of a book about your unfamiliar new everyday life, or collecting the new games you have made up?

Boredom also gives you the opportunity to give free rein to your thoughts, to dream and to realise what does you good and what is lacking. Children benefit when their parents have more time and are at home. Your child will feel comfortable if he or she can talk without being judged, if there is no "must" for explanations. Be confident that you can master this challenging situation well and sustainably for the future. And don't forget: "Boredom is the gateway to fantasy!"

## How to deal with fear if it arises?

*"Why can't I go to school anymore?"*

*"Why can't we visit Grandma and Grandpa anymore?"*

*"When can I go to the sports club again?"*

*"What happens if you never go back to work?"*

The many changes can cause uncertainty for your child. Things that we cannot understand and categorise frighten us. How can you as parents react best to this?

- *Try to stay calm:* children sense their parents' fears and insecurities. Do something good for yourself and try to relax. Talk about your worries within your relationship or group of friends and do not pass them on to your child. Get information from official websites (see link box on the last page), so that you can answer your child's questions. Depending on your child's age, do not let

him or her watch the news. Pictures are more likely to stick and can be unsettling.

- *Pick up on what your child already knows:* in the last few days your child has already heard a lot about the corona virus. Talk about it together. What questions does your child have? Has he or she picked up any information that's not correct? Also keep an eye on your child's media consumption (see above) and preferably look at the information together.
- *Explain in a way that is child friendly:* it is especially difficult for younger children to understand what a virus is. Perhaps you can think of alternative words to explain it, e.g. a disease that is new and that our bodies don't know yet. A vaccine, like for other diseases, is currently being developed. Many people around the world are working on it right now. You'll find more information suitable for children, e.g. on the site of the children's news programme logo! at ZDF and on the website of Meditricks GmbH (see link box on the right). Here, medical students explain the corona virus and how to combat it in a clear video.
- *Personal responsibility:* discuss with your child what you can do as a family to protect yourselves from the disease. You can practice washing your hands regularly and sneezing or coughing into the crook of your arm together. Children like to receive praise when these things are done well. (Video) calls with Grandma and Grandpa or with friends are also an important contribution to dealing with the situation.
- *Feeling good:* conversations are best held in a quiet atmosphere at home. Take time for your child and reassure him or her that there is no reason to worry. Familiar structures (e.g. shared

meals, taking your child to bed, reading aloud, playing, cuddling) are helpful for your child. Not everything should be about the corona virus. A cheerful atmosphere at home helps with learning and feeling good.

#### **Exercise and sports programme:**

Alba-Berlin: [www.youtube.com/albaberlin](http://www.youtube.com/albaberlin)

#### **Official information pages:**

Robert Koch Institute: [www.rki.de](http://www.rki.de)

Federal Government: [www.bundesregierung.de](http://www.bundesregierung.de)

#### **Websites with child-friendly information:**

News for children logo! at ZDF:

[www.zdf.de/kinder/logo/wichtige-infos-zum-coronavirus-100.html](http://www.zdf.de/kinder/logo/wichtige-infos-zum-coronavirus-100.html)

Meditricks GmbH: [www.meditricks.de/cke](http://www.meditricks.de/cke)

#### **Publishing institution:**

Schulpsychologisches und Inklusionspädagogische Beratungs- und Unterstützungszentren (school psychology and inclusive education counseling and support centres - SIBUZ) in Berlin-Pankow  
Tino-Schwierzina-Straße 32, 13089 Berlin  
[www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/unterstuetzung/beratungszentren-sibuz](http://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/unterstuetzung/beratungszentren-sibuz)

#### **Edited by:**

School Psychology Department at SIBUZ Pankow

#### **Translation agency:**

Alpha Translation Service GmbH