

Learning at home

Open Educational Resources





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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
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Introduction

Many families are going through challenging times, often experiencing anxiety over health issues, work pressures, and managing children at home. Trying to support learning at home can be extremely stressful for parents and caregivers. In this guide, we want to support you by providing some key ideas and practical guidelines on how to make learning at home a little easier. We offer tips on preparing for and implementing learning at home, and how to create a positive learning experience.

Educators also have a role to play in encouraging learning at home so that children have ongoing support to reach their full potential. Learning must continue whether it is done at home, online, or in class. Educators need to actively develop appropriate learning resources to help parents and caregivers support the physical, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing of their children.

Various external pressures, combined with fears and anxiety about an uncertain future, can bring a sense of insecurity and emotional tension to any home. We offer some ideas for taking care of your physical and mental wellbeing, focusing on a holistic approach, as well as ways of dealing with acute stress, processing feelings and self-regulation. We have also included a list of learning and health-focused resources that may help you.

Preparing to learn at home

- Spend some time at the start of each week and every day planning, getting ready, and checking that all the resources you need are close by before starting the learning activities.
- Ask your child's school or learning centre for some planned learning activities. Knowing what these activities are will help you to support your child in having fun and understanding the tasks.
- Having a daily routine helps children to feel safe and gives them direction.
- Design a learning schedule that incorporates your family's daily routine.
- Sometimes it is helpful to keep to your child's school or learning centre timetable, including breaks between learning sessions.
- Make a visual schedule. Here are some examples:



Visual schedule examples.

Source: *Rainbows Within Reach*

- Create a safe and supportive learning environment where your child has access to everything they may need. If possible, have dedicated spaces for learning, play, messy play, and outdoor play.
- Make sure the spaces you choose for learning and play get fresh air and have enough light to see well. Try to limit all distracting sounds, lights or toys that may take your child's attention away from the planned activities.
- If you are able to use a table and chair, make sure they are at the right height to give your child the best posture for learning.
- You can also use the floor to encourage various postures during learning activities. See the suggested references at the end of this guide for more information about posture and positioning.

Implementing learning at home

- Encourage and guide your child through the learning activities. Make sure you understand what they need to know or do, and the anticipated outcome.
- Take breaks throughout the day. Get up and, where possible, go outdoors and do something fun. You can plan breaks to include physical activities and exercise games.
- Be flexible to adapting the learning programme or routine if you need to respond to changing conditions. It can get frustrating when things don't go according to plan, but having a flexible framework can help to ease the expectations we tend to place on ourselves.
- Keep learning activities easy, simple, and practical.
- Use everyday objects for learning. For example, bottle tops, dice or orange segments can be used for counting.
- Try to include other children in some of the learning activities, even if they are at different learning stages. Older family members can also get involved with fun family games.
- Remember to change activities and rhythms of routine or learning based on your child's attention, interest, and their own need for change.
- Don't force learning activities as this might cause resistant behaviour either during or in anticipation of the planned activities.
- Learning at home can be a good opportunity to teach your child to help with some developmentally appropriate responsibilities. These might include focusing on self-care and personal hygiene as part of the daily routine.



Nature activity examples.
 Source: Hands On As We Grow



Oral Hygiene



Bathing Ritual



Hair Care



Foot Hygiene



Toileting Hygiene



Hand Hygiene



Coughing and Sneezing Hygiene

Examples of self-care and personal hygiene.
 Source: Goodnight

Creating a positive learning experience

- Make learning fun and interactive, and let your child take the lead whenever possible. This will help to create a positive, happy learning environment that your child will look forward to.
- Stay connected with your child's friends and other family members. Make time for regular communication with them to help your child know they are still there, even if they cannot see or spend time with them.
- Try to limit exposure to news media where negativity is often highlighted.
- If your child doesn't have a special interest or hobby, encourage them to do something they really enjoy or try new things they may not have had time to do before.
- Learning at home can sometimes feel overwhelming. Where possible, set aside some time in the daily routine where you can practice self-care while making sure your child is still safe and cared for.
- Try to eat healthy foods, drink lots of water, and create some form of balance at home. Making these part of the daily routine will be easier if you prepare things in advance.
- Build a network of care and support. This may include family members living with you at home, or close friends who can assist and support you and your child while learning at home.

COVID-19 PARENTING

Tips for Children with Disabilities

All children, including those with disabilities, need love, respect, nurturing, and time, especially during difficult and uncertain times.

Keep your child safe.

- It is strongly recommended that you follow local guidelines for COVID-19 while helping your child stay as active as possible both indoors and outdoors.
- Ask your local support team or intervention centres about special arrangements for the COVID-19.
- Keep emergency contact numbers where you can easily see it, such as on the refrigerator.



Ask for help if you can.

- Share the load with other adult family members.
- You are not alone! Keep connected with people who understand your situation. Share your challenges AND your successes.
- It is normal to feel stressed, frustrated, and afraid at this time.
- Be kind to yourself and take a break when you need to! Tip sheets "When We Get Angry" and "Keep Calm and Manage Stress" have some helpful advice.

Be supportive, empathetic, and loving.

- Your child may not have the same support they usually have, and this can lead to additional challenges such as increased stress, anxiety, and frustration.
- Use physical and verbal support to make your child feel accepted and loved.
- Positive body language, gestures, and words make a big difference!

Communicating with your child.

- Get down to your child's level when communicating with your child.
- Maintain eye contact, a positive attitude.
- Take your time to allow your child the space to communicate.
- Observe, listen to, and confirm that you understand your child.

Reinforce the positive!

- Reinforce strengths with praise and stimulate their abilities rather than highlight the things they cannot do.
- Only help children when they need it. Too much support denies them the chance to become independent and can feel patronising.

Strengthen routines.

- Routines help children feel secure and safe. See tip sheet, "Structure Up!" for more info.
- Create a daily routine with activities that are familiar to your child and include some of their favourite activities.
- Help your child connect to friends and family members via phone chats, writing cards, or drawing pictures.
- Provide your child with choices so that they have a sense of control. This also increases self-esteem.
- Use simple language and clear instructions and nonverbal communication for children who need it (for example: gestures, pictures, and visual aids).

For more information click below links:

TIPS FROM UNICEF

OTHER LANGUAGES

EVIDENCE-BASE

Supporting learning at home

It is important that educators play an active role in ensuring children continue their learning at home when they cannot attend school or a learning centre. Developing appropriate resources will also help parents and caregivers to support the physical, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing of their children.

Research has identified three steps to positive engagement with parents and caregivers:

1. Understanding motivations

The first step in creating any type of learning programme requires a human-centred approach to understanding the knowledge gaps and cultural aspects that inform parenting choices. Socio-economic factors that may influence the learner's environment and development also need to be considered, as well as ways of enabling access to resources or referrals that are economically and lifestyle appropriate.

2. Meeting parents where they are at

Information can be shared using various communication tools such as cell phones, emails or apps, as well as more far-reaching media such as television and radio. Using these platforms to distribute content and knowledge effectively can reach many families, and encourage parent and caregiver engagement.

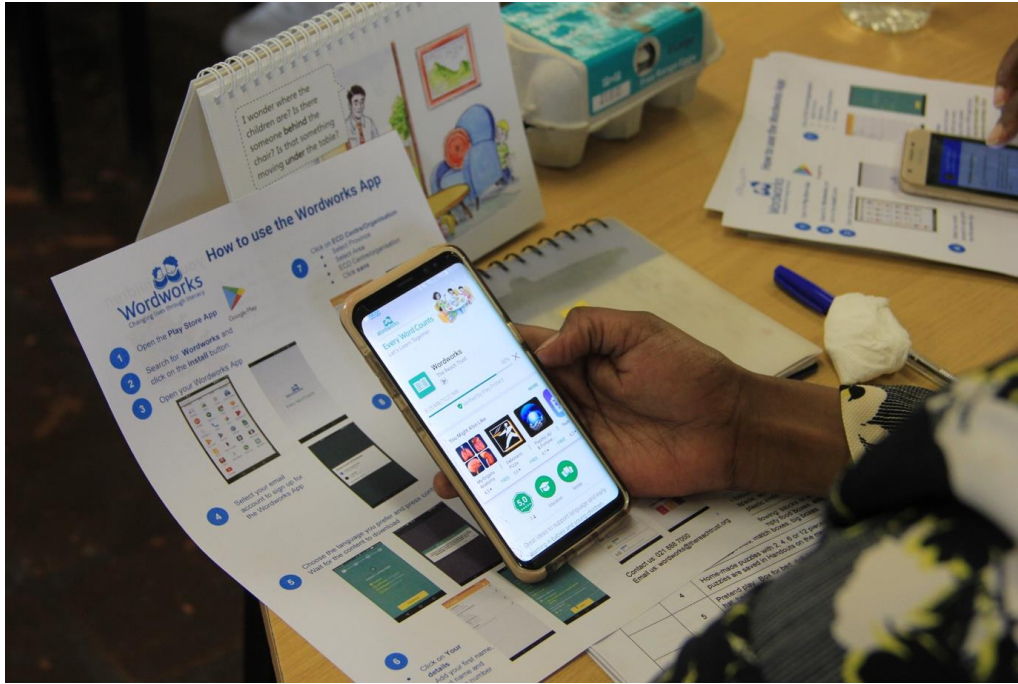
3. Collaborating with partners

A key way to reach parents and caregivers is to work with people who already form part of their network. These often include health practitioners and social support programmes.

Designing learning resources

These are some factors to consider when designing resources for learning at home:

- Plan a well-designed, holistic programme for learning at home. Make sure the curriculum or learning outcomes include aspects that are age or developmentally appropriate for each child you are working with.
- Use free resources wherever possible.
- Encourage access to learning through remote learning platforms, data-free apps, or data-light platforms.



Wordworks is a South African NPO that has an app that focuses on early language and literacy development.

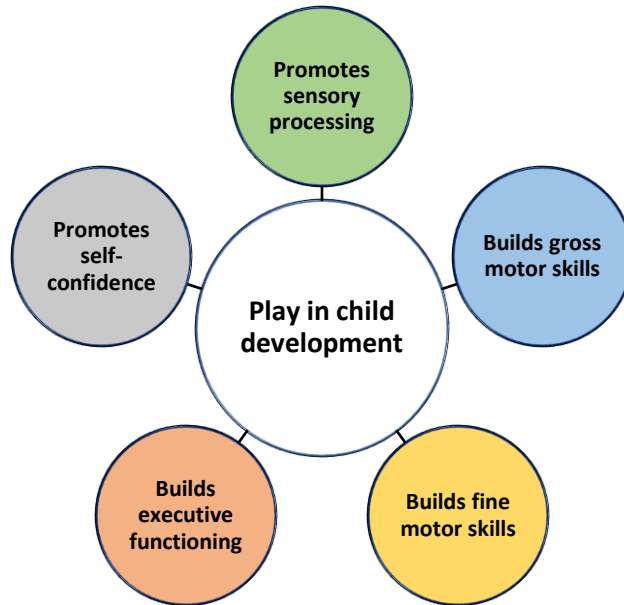
Source: Wordworks



Nal'ibali is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading.

Source: Nal'ibali

- Prepare learning programmes that offer various levels of engagement and content that ranges from easy to challenging. Also take into consideration parents' and caregivers' abilities, availability, and resources.
- Children learn best when learning is fun and interactive. Children's natural learning style is play, so include various aspects of play, fun, and games in learning activities.



Five ways play builds child development.
 Source: Adapted from *The OT Toolbox*

- Create programmes that form part of a daily routine. Routines can include activities of daily living, learning activities, personal hygiene, toilet and body breaks, and indoor and outdoor play.
- Learning programmes should include language and literacy at various levels, allowing time for listening, speaking or communication, stories, and reading.

Listen to our audio stories on SABC during this shutdown period!

Ikewkewzi FM Mon, Wed & Fri: 09:45 IsiNdebele	Thobela FM Tues & Thurs: 14:50 Sun: 07:50am Sepedi	Phalaphala FM Mon, Tues & Wed: 11:15 Tshivenda	Munghana Lonene FM Mon, Wed & Fri: 09:35 Xitsonga
Ukhozi FM Wed: 09:20 Sat: 08:50 IsiZulu	Lesedi FM Mon, Tues & Thurs: 09:45 Sesotho	Umhlobo Wenene FM Mon, Tues & Wed: 09:30 Isixhosa	SA FM Mon, Wed & Fri: 13:50 English
Ligwalagwala FM Mon, Tues & Wed: 09:10 SiSwati	RSG Mon, Tues & Wed: 19:10 Afrikaans	Motsweding FM Mon, Wed & Fri: 09:20 – 09:30 Setswana	

Click here to view your favorite radio schedule

Radio is a popular way of engaging with storytelling. Nal'ibali stories are broadcast on SABC radio stations.

Source: *Nal'ibali*

- If you have access to services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physiotherapy, include some trans-disciplinary therapeutic activities in the learning programme.
- Provide additional learning resources for families who have access to online platforms or have more time to invest in learning. Only offer these to parents and caregivers who show interest in wanting to do more as the extra workload may make some families feel overwhelmed.
- Encourage creativity and free play during daily routines. This can be done by providing guidelines on arts and crafts, or making up pre-packed resources that include activities for encouraging creative play at home.
- Help families to use learning activity resources they may already have at home. This would need to be planned as part of a learning programme and require some basic instructions for parents and caregivers to know what to do. Examples include making toys from recyclables or planning activities using everyday objects.
- Children can learn more through a play-based curriculum than theoretical planned sessions. Help families by planning weekly play sessions for them to practice playing and learning at home.

Taking care of your health

The COVID-19 pandemic has created increasing mental health challenges. In times of stress and uncertainty, mental wellbeing should be a focus for all children, parents, caregivers, educators, and support teams. It is important that children know about safety precautions that can be taken to protect their health. Parents and caregivers need to have real and developmentally appropriate conversations with their children about what they need to do.

Holistic health

Taking care of your health holistically means doing activities that focus on physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. When working with children with disabilities it is important to support holistic health and wellbeing.

Wellness dimension	Support
Physical Developing healthy activities that benefit your body. It is taking care of your body.	Balanced diet, nutrition plan, exercise, physical therapies/activities
Emotional Taking care of yourself and developing ways to enhance your inner resources.	Self-care, stress reduction, relaxation, self-regulation, creative expression
Intellectual Using your resources to expand your knowledge, to create, and to be mentally stimulated.	Learning activities, mentally stimulating experiences, problem solving
Spiritual Enhances the connection between your mind and your body. It is personal growth.	Connecting to soul/higher source; alignment of mind, body and spirit
Social Developing healthy relationships with those around you. It is contributing to your community.	Communication, setting boundaries, growing healthy relationships
Occupational Contributing in a work environment that accommodates each other's weaknesses and strengths in a healthy way.	Creating optimal work and learning environments

Acute stress response

In times of acute stress and high alert, you might experience a fight, flight or freeze response. This is called hyperarousal, which causes a physiological reaction in the body in response to a perceived threat to survival. One way of coping with the physiological responses we face on a daily basis involves using techniques to help activate the body's calming system (called the parasympathetic nervous system) to decrease stress and anxiety. These include:

- spending time or playing with others, children or animals
- deep or rhythmic breathing
- massage
- spending time outdoors in nature
- focusing on a calming word or sound
- exercise, movement or dancing
- guided visualisation or meditation
- practicing progressive relaxation.

Other fun activities for children to do include using movement to soothe body tension and mood. Rhythmic movement such as swinging, swaying, tapping or bouncing can help to relieve tension. Deep pressure can provide calming physiological feedback to the brain and can be done through tight hugs, rolling in a tight blanket on the floor, or using a weighted blanket or padded jacket. Playing with a beanbag, play dough, or feeling inside a sensory bag or box can also help.

5 COVID-19 PARENTING Keep Calm and Manage Stress

This is a stressful time. Take care of yourself, so you can support your children.

You are not alone.

- Millions of people have the same fears as us. Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling. Listen to them. Avoid social media that makes you feel panicked.

Take a break.

- We all need a break sometimes. When your children are asleep, do something fun or relaxing for yourself. Make a list of healthy activities that YOU like to do. You deserve it!

Listen to your kids.

- Be open and listen to your children. Your children will look to you for support and reassurance. Listen to your children when they share how they are feeling. Accept how they feel and give them comfort.



Take a Pause.

1-minute relaxation activity that you can do whenever you are feeling stressed or worried.

- Step 1: Set up**
 - Find a comfortable sitting position, your feet flat on the floor, your hands resting in your lap.
 - Close your eyes if you feel comfortable.
- Step 2: Think, feel, body**
 - Ask yourself, "What am I thinking now?"
 - Notice your thoughts. Notice if they are negative or positive.
 - Notice how you feel emotionally. Notice if your feelings are happy or not.
 - Notice how your body feels. Notice anything that hurts or is tense.

- Step 3: Focus on your breath**
 - Listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
 - You can put a hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall with each breath.
 - You may want to say to yourself "It's okay. Whatever it is, I am okay."
 - Then just listen to your breath for a while.
- Step 4: Coming back**
 - Notice how your whole body feels.
 - Listen to the sounds in the room.
- Step 5: Reflecting**
 - Think 'do I feel different at all?'
 - When you are ready, open your eyes.

Taking a Pause can also be helpful when you find your child is irritating you or has done something wrong. It gives you a chance to be calmer. Even a few deep breaths or connecting with the feeling of the floor beneath can make a difference. You can also Take a Pause with your children!

For more information click below links:

Parenting tips from WHO

Parenting tips from UNICEF

In worldwide languages

EVIDENCE-BASE



unicef
for every child



End Violence Against Children



Research that's making a difference



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



The COVID-19 Playful Parenting Emergency Response is supported by the LEGO Foundation, the philanthropic donors to the University of Oxford's COVID-19 Research Response Fund and the UKRI GCRF Accessing Achievement for Africa's Adolescence (AccessAA) Hub. Research on Parenting for Lifelong Health is supported by the UKRI GCRF AccessAA Hub, the Gair Foundation, the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme and the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, UNICEF INHQ (Innovative GCRF Supportable Impact Fund), the Leverhulme Trust, the Economic and Social Research Council, CIM, the National Research Foundation of South Africa, Mfu Labemba, the John Fell Fund, the Evaluation Fund, the UBS Optimus Foundation, USAID-PPFAA, the Wellcome Trust, Grand Challenges Canada and Wellbeing Advisors.

Processing feelings

Regardless of intellectual ability, children can experience anxiety and confusion when their normal routines are disrupted. They may not express or explain their feelings or fear in words, but it might be demonstrated in their behaviour, which can become challenging.

Moods and emotions can be self-regulated through external sources of calm.

‘Calming/quiet critters’ (pom-poms with googly eyes and felt feet) can be used to help children who are working on coping with anxiety or anger management. Making calming/quiet critters not only provides sensory input, but is also a fun way to have a supportive creature that children can:

- whisper their worries to
- hold tightly or play with when they feel worried
- put next to their bed when they want protection from scary dreams
- talk to when they feel angry.



Examples of calming/quiet critters.

Source: Ciara Sexton

Another popular idea for helping children to identify and name their worries is a ‘worry monster’. This is a tangible way for children to notice their feelings, thoughts, and worries, and then choose to let them go in a practical way by writing notes or drawing pictures and feeding them to the worry monster, or just talking to it.



Worry monsters can be made by decorating empty tissue boxes and tins with lids.

Self-regulation





Self-regulation and emotional control can help children to control impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their problem-solving ability. The Zones of Regulation, or 'Zones' for short, is a cognitive behavioural approach to teaching self-regulation. It categorises different feelings and states of alertness using four colour-coded zones:

- **Blue** is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.
- **Green** is used to describe a calm state of alertness. This is where optimal learning occurs. It may be described as being happy, focused, content, or ready to learn.
- **Yellow** is used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions. A person in the yellow zone may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, or nervousness.
- **Red** is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person in the red zone may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, devastation, or terror.



To be used with *The Zones of Regulation™* curriculum
Reproducible E

The **ZONES** of Regulation™

			
BLUE ZONE Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	GREEN ZONE Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	YELLOW ZONE Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	RED ZONE Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control

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From *The Zones of Regulation™* by Leah M. Kuypers • Available at www.socialthinking.com

Most children who struggle with anxiety find change and unpredictability difficult to deal with. It is important to find ways to reduce their anxiety so they can continue with learning. Some keys ways to do this include:

- **Managing the amount and type of information children are exposed to.** Give clear, simple, and real information about topics that cause concern. Watching or listening to news reports can be overwhelming and frightening. Be hopeful about the future. Let your child ask questions and express fears, and do your best to answer these honestly, clearly, and reassuringly. Repeat any safety measures or precautions as needed.
- **Creating new structures and routines at home that focus on health and wellbeing.** Keeping a daily routine creates some sense of predictability for your child. Most children on the autism spectrum need structure and well-organized activities. Many are visual learners so it can help to provide concrete information about the day in a visual format by using words, symbols, photos or pictures.
- **Making exercise and relaxation part of the daily routine.** Exercising outdoors has many benefits, and walking is both rhythmic and soothing. Relaxation times need to be included in the daily routine and may include stretches, walks, and jumping in puddles – whatever your child is motivated to do. Give your child opportunities to talk about issues that are worry them. Play games, make chore time fun, and create shared family activities.

- **Accepting your child’s coping strategies and supporting them in finding better ways to regulate anxiety and overwhelm.** Coping strategies for managing anxiety could include rocking, stimming, having space and time to do what they want to do, or simply staying close to you. These vary from child to child. Let them focus on what they are motivated to do and try to use their interests as opportunities for learning new things.

Suggested reading and resources

Aldersey, H. 2019. TEDI 1 Week 3 – Family professional partnerships
<https://hdl.handle.net/11427/30306>

Daniel, B. 2019. TEDI1 Week 3 – What does effective support look like?
<https://hdl.handle.net/11427/30304>

Developing a Learning Programme
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEzu6KXHoyE>

Disability Inclusion in Education
<https://www.coursera.org/learn/disability-inclusion-education>

Disability Information Resources (posture and positioning)
<https://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/global/david/dwe001/dwe00105.html>

Engaging the Child
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmsxeVGfuW8>

Hands On As We Grow (nature activities for children)
<https://handsonaswegrow.com/nature-activities-kids/>

Learning Context
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKtlKkQLO_8&feature=youtu.be

Maisha, R. and J. Elphick, 2019–06. TEDI 1 Week 2 – Families of people with intellectual disabilities
<https://hdl.handle.net/11427/30320>

Nal’ibali (storytelling)
<https://www.nalibali.org/>

Physiopedia (posture and positioning)
https://www.physio-pedia.com/Positioning_the_Child_with_Cerebral_Palsy#Posture_and_Posture_Control

Rainbows Within Reach (visual schedules)
<https://rainbowswithinreach.blogspot.com/2012/06/visual-prompts-schedules-and-supports.html>

Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/intellectual-disability-care-education>

TEDI Educating and Caring for Children with Profound Intellectual Disability: A manual for carers and teachers

<http://dev.idea.uct.ac.za/idea/resources>

TEDI Parent Guide: Empowering parents for disability inclusive teaching

<http://dev.idea.uct.ac.za/idea/courses/overview>

The OT Toolbox (the power of play)

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/the-incredible-power-of-play/>

The Zones of Regulation (self-regulation and emotional control)

<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/learn-more-about-the-zones.html>

Understanding Learning in ID


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGB6l5rGReA>


Wordworks (early language and literacy)

<https://www.wordworks.org.za/wordworks-app/>

COVID - 19 PANDEMIC CALL CENTRES AND HOTLINES					
Coronavirus Hotline: 0800 029 999	National Crisis Line: 0861 322 322	South African Police Service: 08600 10111	Reporting undue price increases: 0800 141 880	Child Line: 0800 055 555	Department of Home Affairs: 0800 601 190
Persons with Disabilities: SMS 'help' to 31531	Support to SMMEs in distress: 0860 663 7867	AIDS Helpline: 0800 012 322	Department of Trade and Industry: 080 000 6543	Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567 OR 0800 456 789	Department of Water and Sanitation: 0800 200 200
GB VF - Related service complaints: 0800 333 177	PostBank Call Centre: 0800 53 54 55	Gender-based Violence Command centre: 0800 428 428 OR *120*7867# (free)	UIF Call Centre: 0800 030 007	Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit: 0800 150 150	Department of Tourism: 0860 868 747
National Institute for Communicable Diseases: 0800 029 999	Women Abuse Helpline: 0800 150 150	National Human Trafficking Helpline: 0800 222 777	SASSA Call Centre: 0800 60 10 11	Presidential Hotline: 17737	WE ARE HERE TO HELP

WHATSAPP SUPPORT
0600 123 456
EMERGENCY NUMBER
0800 029 999
sacoronavirus.co.za


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Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) (2020). 'Learning at Home', Cape Town: TEDI, September 2020.

Cover photo: Wordworks, Cape Town.



This resource provides some key ideas and practical guidelines to support parents and caregivers with learning at home. It offers tips on preparing for and implementing learning at home, and how to create a positive learning experience. Acknowledging the challenges and pressures families face, this guide takes a holistic approach in suggesting various ways for keeping on top of physical and mental health, as well as tips for coping with stress, processing feelings and self-regulation. A wide range of learning and health-focused resources are listed too.



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