

Hello everybody. I hope you're doing well as we move further into our home-based learning. Today I thought I would speak to you about the importance of routines. The information that I'm going to share with you is from two sources: one is from Aha Parenting, and the other is from my experience as a mother, and my experience of working long-distance with my two daughters, who are in lockdown in two different countries. As many of you know, I was the Head of ISS during the SARS epidemic several years ago. So, what I'm going to talk about comes from, very much, these resources.

I learnt, as a mother, when my children were very small during SARS, one was 3 years old, and the other was 5, almost 6, that routines are really important. Why are they important? In a situation of uncertainty and ambiguity, those routines help to give children and yourself a sense of control over the situation that, at a very large extent, is not really controllable. I found that having some kind of a fixed schedule worked really well. I had a fixed schedule for school days, and a fixed schedule for weekends as well.

What would the schedule look like?

On a school day, I recommend that the children and young adults start their day, pretty much, at the normal time. You can see that we've designed our home-based learning to do that. There are check-ins, there's Kampong time; there's all sorts of things going on to make sure that we all come together as a school at the normal time. And then, it's important that during the school day, during home-based learning, that there's times for breaks, exercise, a proper lunch break, some more breaks in the afternoon. In the evening, we make time for fun activities – free-time activities that we all like to engage in. If that routine is followed to the best extent possible, I think it really helps to give students a sense of security.

Likewise, on non-school days, I know it's very difficult to do many of the things that we do on a weekend or on holidays, but if we do have a fixed schedule that is agreed upon in advance, perhaps, if we have breakfast together at this time, then we'll do this activity together, then we'll have lunch, then we'll maybe have some free time and some free space; that's really important too.

I want to emphasize this idea of giving students some space as well to do their own activities. When I talk to my daughter in Scotland, who is now in lockdown for almost the third week, she said to me that what was really important to her is to have that time in the day when she can do exactly what she needs to do maintain a sense of being centered, comfortable, and secure. For her, that means playing one of the instruments that she plays, singing or listening to music. That can be many things. For me, it means going out for a long run. That's how I maintain a sense of being centered, and being in control as well. I think we need to work with our children to work out what it is that they actually need.

This leads on to the idea of self-care – taking care of ourselves and building that into a daily routine. Of course, within all of that is caring for others as well. I was part of a very inspirational webinar this morning, with Heads of School from the EARCOS (East Asia Regional Council of Schools) region. We were working with an educational psychologist who talked about people's ability to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty. He talked about all of us having different tolerance levels, and for us to go through various cycles of feeling

insecure, uncertain and so on. And so, we need to be aware of how people are feeling, we need to understand when our friends or our colleagues are having a bad day, and we really need to be kind and caring to each other. If we do that, as a community, we will all come out stronger at the end of all of this. We will strengthen our resilience to cope with uncertainty. So, let's get these routines going.

On that note, I'm off for a very long run.

Have a wonderful long weekend, and we'll touch base again next week.