

This is **Cup of Sunshine** – your Friday Podcast brought to you by the Phoenix Centre Team of the Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg.

Welcome! I'm Katja Fleck, the manager of the Phoenix Centre, I am a mindfulness teacher and Psychologist. Over the next few weeks we are going to share helpful hints and tips for managing life during the uncertain times of Covid-19. Today I would like to speak about **how to support our children while they learn at home**.



We need to acknowledge that the current situation is one never encountered by anyone of us before. And we are all learning. Let's unpack how we can work together.

First, set up a **chart or timetable and use your school diary**. As already mentioned in previous podcasts, this is really important! To motivate your child, get her or him involved: for example in the layout. For a younger child you need to take the lead regarding times for work, play, meals and so on, maybe according to your own schedule. If you are an older learner, present your own chart to your caregivers. Have a trial run and later change things if necessary. This is how we learn to manage our responsibilities ourselves - an essential skill when starting life as an adult. Initially, and every other day, expect some resistance with following the timetable. Stay calm and insist on the schedule. Allow some time to get into the new routine. In case there are still difficulties contact us and we can help find a way which works for you!

Second, give your children the chance **to solve a task on their own**. Your task as the adult is to guide the process – no matter the subject. Only get involved as much as needed when helping your child to self-instruct. To memorise the “**step-by-step self-instruction**” just repeat after me by using your thumb and fingers.

- Thumb: I read the instruction.
 - Index finger: I repeat it in my own words.
 - Middle finger: I do the task - step by step.
 - Ring finger: I check if I am still on the right track.
 - Little finger: When done I check if the task is actually completed.
- ➔ Now: Thumbs up! Well done!

You may include times into your schedule for questions and check-ins. When to do that depends on your child's ability to concentrate and self-instruct. Of course, the younger a child, the more they need help. Maybe you need to sit next to your child while you are working yourself and sometimes even point to the exercise to bring their attention back. But remember above guidelines!

Also, dear learners: You are encouraged to contact your teacher when you get stuck! And when your parents are at home, give them a chance to do their work. Once all of you are done you can enjoy some free time!

Third, let your child make choices as often as possible. This provides a sense of control. Remember that having control over a situation is so important in uncertain times. You may give a choice for lunch or what to do together in a break or which subject to work on first. Remember you can give suggestions but do not negotiate any rules: for example, when to begin with school

work. For the whole family you can adopt one rule: *You can always ask. And the answer can be yes or no.*

By the way there are also consequences with each choice: if you chose to not do something now, you will have to do it later. Help your offspring to foresee possible consequences.

Fourth, teach your child positive self-talk. Resistance to school work might sound like: “I can’t do this”, “This is boring, I hate it”. For us parents it can be challenging to stay calm in these situations: Is my child trying to get out of the task or does she believe this? Offer alternative phrases while continuing helping with “self-instruction”. For example, Jamie says: “I can’t do Maths. I am too stupid.” You can answer: “**Sometimes** I find Maths really difficult. It seems I have **not yet** grasped it. Let me take a breath and begin with the instruction.” Then you point to the exercise and say: “Jamie, please read the instruction out loud.” If you help your child in this way, positive self-talk will also become second nature. However, should you experience difficulties contact us for some advice.

To you, dear learners: Catch your thoughts! Are they true, are they helpful? Replace them with thoughts which help you to get through a situation - instead of putting you down. Maybe it feels odd in the beginning but stick to it and you will see: it works!

Fifth, praise your child and celebrate accomplishments! If your child makes mistakes - that’s ok. This is how we learn. Did your child get through their work on their own and finish it? “Well done for finishing your work and for working by yourself! Let’s enjoy a short movement break together to celebrate!” For older learners: Think about how to praise and celebrate yourself! And then go and do it!

Sixth, enjoy family time! These are likely the only “in body” social contacts you have at the moment. Spend time playing, laughing, cuddling - whatever it is you and your family enjoy doing. After some family time your child will be more relaxed as their basic need of human connection is met.

And last but not least, **seventh:** As adults, **we need to practise what we preach.** We need to model the integrity and reliability we want to see in our offspring. This includes: Staying calm and focused when instructing our child and when working in our job; modelling how to make choices; applying positive self-talk when faced with challenges and celebrating time to relax and to engage with the family.

And let’s be realistic: on some days we might lose our cool and shout, we might be behind schedule or we may over-eat. Let’s show our children as well how to be gentle on ourselves when things are not going so well.

That’s all for today. I hope you’ll join us next week for more helpful hints and tips for managing life during the times of Covid-19.