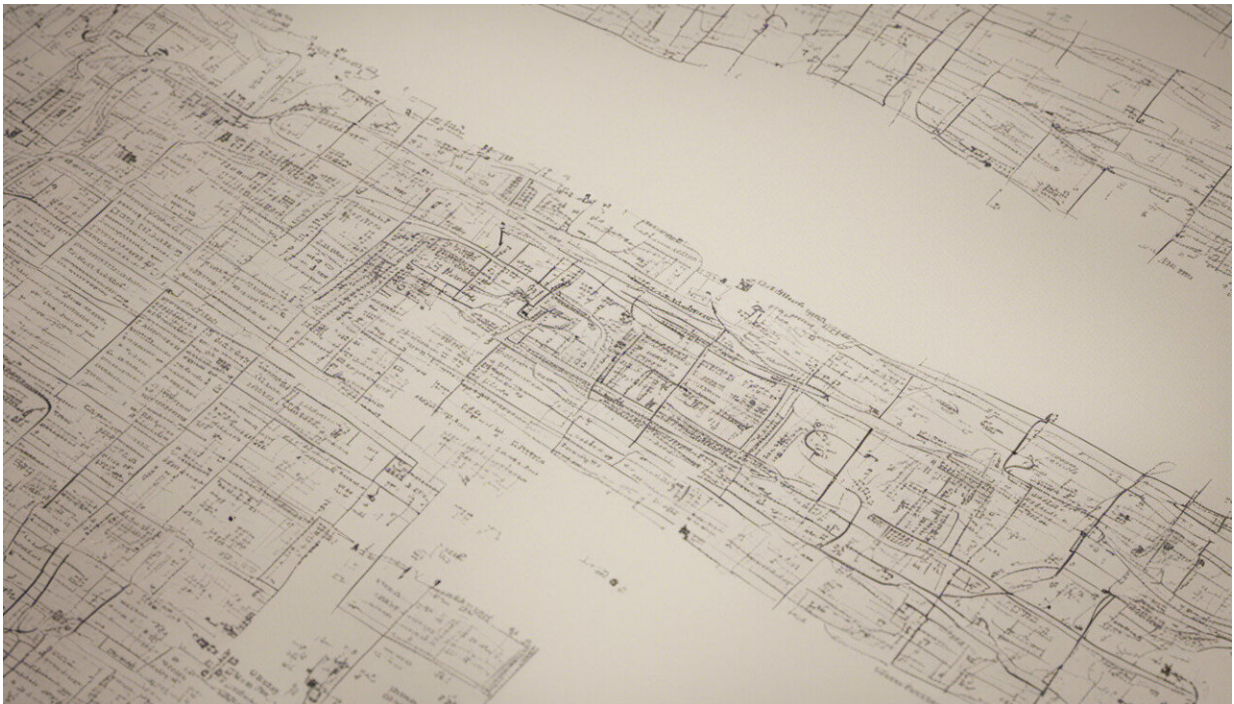


Don't panic, plan: COVID-19 family survival ideas

March 27 2020, by Chris McIntyre



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

If families are going to survive the Covid-19 lockdown happily, planning is going to be key, according to Professor Ann Buchanan of Oxford's department of social policy, who has come up with the Four Bs as a plan for a successful family lockdown.

Planning needs to go into [daily life](#), she maintains, in order to alleviate the inevitable stress on both [children](#) and [parents](#) of constant contact. Professor Buchanan's Four Bs are all about planning. She says: "A good way to handle to stress is to have a routine that happens five days a week with more relaxed days at weekends. But, kids of all ages, also need the Four Bs."

- First, Busy. The temptation is that [younger children](#) will spend their time in front of the TV while [older children](#) spend all day on social media.
- Second, Brain. Hopefully, schools have given projects/challenges, which they work on with friends, but which also require some work on their own.
- Third, Body. Exercise. The government has set strict rules- no team games but walking, cycling, running are all allowed.
- Finally, Buddies. Most kids are good at linking up with friends on social media. But, if parents are not careful, this can be a full day activity.

Professor Buchanan says: "My instinct would be to divide the day into three—Brain in the morning, Body in the afternoon and Buddies after tea."

And, she says: "Once children get a routine, parents will have time to concentrate on their work. So settling children is good for parental mental health. They need to look after themselves. Many parents are struggling with less money on top of all the other problems."

The beauty of the Four Bs, though, is that you don't need children for them to work. Everyone benefits from having a routine, according to the Professor.

"You need to get up at regular times and not just wear sloppy clothes,"

she says.

But why is this period proving so difficult for families? Isn't it good for parents and children to be together? And, after all, we are together at other times of year; Christmas and holidays. But, says Professor Buchanan, this crisis and the prime minister's call to stay at home came suddenly on families, who may, in normal times, see little of each other. Coronavirus left no opportunity for planning—and there is no knowing how long this situation will continue.

"It's challenging," she says. "Christmas and holidays are limited and it can be stressful just being together for two weeks. We don't know how long this is going to go on."

Being thrown together overnight, with little opportunity even to go outside, has created a 'very intense' situation. Professor Buchanan says: "These are stressful times for parents...They may have their own work to do, but they also have to think about their children's wellbeing. Meanwhile, many children will be anxious and worry about their own health."

A key way to maintain motivation, for teenagers and adults alike, is to focus on the fact that self-isolation is for doing something for someone else. Professor Buchanan says: "It gives them a purpose, if you appeal to people's better nature. [If they don't think about their situation] It takes them out of themselves. The fact that it is a global emergency in that it is not just our emergency.

"It always makes you feel better if you're doing something for someone else—or saving the world."

Provided by University of Oxford

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