**#StayHome: How to Create Functional Spaces in Your Home   
During the Coronavirus Outbreak**

Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), many of us are spending a lot more time at home. We’re all being called upon to avoid public spaces and practice social distancing to help slow the spread of this infectious disease. While it can be understandably challenging, there are ways you can modify your home and your lifestyle to make the best of this difficult situation.

Here are a few tips for creating comfortable and functional spaces within your home for work, school, and fitness. We also share some of our favorite ways to stay connected as a community, because we’re all in this together … and no one should face these trying times alone.

**Begin with the Basics**

A basic home emergency preparedness kit is a great addition to any home, even under normal circumstances. It should include items like water, non-perishable food, a flashlight, first aid kit, and other essentials you would need should you temporarily lose access to food, water, or electricity.

Fortunately, authorities don’t anticipate any serious interruptions to utilities or the food supply during this outbreak. However, it may be a good time to start gathering your emergency basics in a designated location, so you’ll be prepared now-—and in the future—should your family ever need them.

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| Ready to start building an emergency kit for your home? *Contact us for a free copy of our Home Emergency Preparation Checklist!* |

**Working From Home**

Many employees are being asked to work remotely. If you’re transitioning to a home office for the first time, it’s important to create a designated space for work … so it doesn’t creep into your home life, and vice versa. If you live in a small condominium or apartment, this may feel impossible. But try to find a quiet corner where you can set up a desk and comfortable chair. The simple act of separating your home and work spaces can help you focus during work hours and “turn off” at the end of the day.

Of course, if you have children who are home with you all day (given many schools and daycares are now closed), separating your home and work life will be more difficult. Unless you have a partner who can serve as the primary caregiver, you will need to help manage the needs of your children while juggling work and virtual meetings.

If both parents are working from home, try alternating shifts, so you each have a designated time to work and to parent. If that’s not an option, experts recommend creating a schedule for your children, so they know when you’re available to play, and when you need to work.1 A red stop sign on the door can help remind them when you shouldn’t be disturbed. And for young children, blocking off a specific time each day for them to nap or have independent screen time can give you a window to schedule conference calls or work uninterrupted.

**Homeschooling Your Children**

Many parents with school-aged children will be taking on a new challenge: homeschooling. Similar to a home office, designating a space for learning activities can help your child transition between play and school. If you’re working from home, the homeschooling area would ideally be located near your workspace, so you can offer assistance and answer questions, as needed.

If possible, dedicate a desk or table where your child’s work can be spread out—and left out when they break for meals and snacks. Position supplies and materials nearby so they are independently accessible, and place a trash can and recycling bin within reach for easy cleanup. A washable, plastic tablecloth can help transition an academic space into an arts and crafts area.

If the weather is nice, try studying outside! A porch swing is a perfect spot for reading, and gardening in the backyard is a great addition to any science curriculum.

In addition to creating an academic learning environment, find age-appropriate opportunities for your children to help with household chores and meal preparation. Homeschooling advocates emphasize the importance of developing life skills alongside academic ones.2 And with more meals and activities taking place at home, there will be ample opportunity for every family member to pitch in and help.

**Staying Fit**

With gyms closed and team sports canceled, it can be tempting to sit on the sofa and binge Netflix. However, maintaining the physical health and mental wellness of you and your family is crucial right now. Implementing a regular exercise routine at home can help with both.

If you live in a community where you can safely exercise outdoors while maintaining the recommended distance between you and other residents, try to get out as much as possible. If the weather is nice, go for family walks, jogs, or bike rides.

Can’t get outside? Fortunately, you don’t need a home gym or fancy exercise equipment to stay fit. Look for a suitable space in your home, garage, or basement where you can comfortably move—you’ll probably need at least a 6’ x 6’ area for each person. Many cardio and strength training exercises require little (or no) equipment, including jumping jacks, lunges, and pushups.

And if you prefer a guided workout, search for free exercise videos on YouTube—there are even options specifically geared towards kids—or try one of the many fitness apps available.

**Socializing From a Distance**

Even though we’re all being called upon to practice “social distancing” right now, there are still ways to stay safely connected to our communities and our extended families. Picking up the phone is a great place to start. Make an effort to reach out to neighbors and loved ones who live alone and may be feeling particularly isolated right now.

And while parties and playdates may be prohibited, modern technology offers countless ways to organize networked gatherings with family and friends. Try using group video conferencing tools like [Google Hangouts](https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet/) and [Zoom](https://www.zoom.us/) to facilitate a virtual happy hour or book club. Host a [Netflix Party](https://www.netflixparty.com/) to watch (and chat about) movies with friends. Or plan a virtual game night and challenge your pals to a round of [Psych](https://www.warnerbros.com/games-and-apps/psych-outwit-your-friends/) or [Yahtzee](https://www.pogo.com/games/yahtzeeparty#game).

There are safe ways to connect offline, too. Rediscover the lost art of letter writing. Drop off groceries on an elderly neighbor’s porch. Or organize a neighborhood “chalk walk,” where children use sidewalk chalk to decorate their driveways and then head out for a stroll to view their friends’ artwork.

Of course, there’s one group of people who you can still socialize with freely—those who reside in your home. Family dinners are back, siblings are reconnecting, and many of us have been given the gift of time, with commutes, activities, and obligations eliminated. In fact, some families are finding that this crisis has brought them closer than ever.

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

Even with all of the tools and technology available to keep us connected, many of us are still feeling stressed, scared, and isolated. However, you can rest assured that you are not alone. We’re not only here to help you buy and sell real estate. We want to be a resource to our clients and community through good times and bad. If you and your family are in need of assistance, please reach out and let us know how we can help.

Sources:

1. CNBC -  
   <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/16/how-to-work-from-home-with-your-kids-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>
2. TheHomeSchoolMom.com -  
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