



Chores and conversations: how to keep children engaged

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(Mains GS 4 : Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating moral and ethical values)

Context:

The pandemic-related lockdowns have been particularly difficult for children, parents, teachers and the elderly.

Learning from home:

- Children have been mostly indoors for over a year.
- Toddlers may not remember this period later, but for older children, there is little at home to stimulate their curious, active minds.
- With schools remaining shut, children have been attending online classes.
- Many parents have reported that their children, especially in the 4-6 age group, have been finding it hard to focus during online classes.

Increasing disinterest:

- Children have shown disinterest and show lack of motivation.
- Some Of them don't participate during class and they keep themselves busy on their parents' phones and other gaming sites, or by chatting with their friends.
- To make matters worse, children are inclined to unwind after a long day of virtual learning by again being on their gadgets.
- Once the pandemic ends, a great challenge is going to be to cure children of their screen addiction.
- Studies have found that limiting the use of online time can lead to significant reductions in loneliness and depression.

Teachers adopt to new technology:

- Since this is a new system for teachers too, they are unable to constantly keep track of what the children are up to.

- Online tests and assessments cannot always be monitored.
- Some parents have said that they have caught their children cheating during tests.
- Teachers have had to learn new ways of making virtual classes engaging and fun and prepare content accordingly.
- While in the classroom, teachers give special attention to children with learning difficulties, this hasn't been possible during the pandemic.
- Children with dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc. have it especially hard at a time like this.

Responsibility of parents increases:

- It has become almost entirely the parents' responsibility to help the child, when they themselves are overburdened.
- With no day-care centres, after-school care centres, play dates, sleepovers and so on, it has become the task of the parents to help in their children's education, look after them, and entertain them, all while doing their own work.

Higher school students have different issues:

- Higher school students have been facing challenges in learning in the absence of laboratories and field visits.
- Many are set to graduate from school without having met their friends for over a year.
- While this may not be a problem for all students and some enjoy being at home, others may find it more challenging to re-enter social life and should do so slowly.
- Entrance exams have been postponed for college admissions and so, students feel demotivated to prepare.

Increasing inequality:

- The pandemic has exacerbated the divide between the rich and poor.
- The lesser privileged children who have had little or no access to smartphones, computers and Internet have reported feeling dejected.
- School dropouts are becoming a big problem in the near future.

Solving the students challenge:

While the situation can improve only when the pandemic abates and schools reopen, parents and teachers can do a few things to keep the children happy and engaged.

Parents should be proactive:

- Parents should be proactive and positive, this could have a big impact on their children.
- Children pick up quickly on parents' fears and so it is important for parents to remain calm and patient and meet their children's concerns in an age-appropriate manner.
- If parents show that they are resilient, children too will learn to be that way.

- To keep the children engaged at home, parents can assign them tasks and chores.
- They can train their children to cook, clean, and focus on basic hygiene.
- All this will help the children throughout their adult life.

Understand trouble of children:

- Parents should also look out for signs that indicate that the child is having trouble coping.
- If children are unable to follow a routine, sleep poorly, and constantly complain of anxiety, fear, etc., parents should take note.
- All these emotions could have a long-term impact on the children.
- Parents can also set an example by doing a digital detox.

Conclusion:

- Spending time with young children and listening to their stories is important as they require a lot of attention.
- If parents are unavailable, children will seek out others online, which could be dangerous.
- Pursuing hobbies, exercising, and hitting the outdoors while following COVID-19 protocols will all help keep the body and mind active and refreshed.