

# Helping Families Find New Rhythms

## *Intentional Ways to Spend Our Time in Quarantine*

### Rhythms Restore Order

Our lives move towards a rhythm. Natural rhythms evolve around us. In nature, day follows night; summer follows fall, then winter, then spring. Plants know this rhythm. Animals know the rhythm.

COVID-19 has disrupted the rhythm of the entire world. For many of us, we find ourselves in shock. Perhaps at first, we were denial of the reality of the dismantling of the ways we once lived our lives, both collectively and individually. Many were disappointed with canceled spring break vacations, but we coped by operating as if we were on a “staycation.” As reality sets in, we begin to realize the children are not returning to school, the events and activities are not happening, and the paychecks may stop coming. Amidst this unfamiliar chaos, we will seek to find a new rhythm.

#### *God restores order through healthy rhythms*

Throughout history and from the beginning, God has created order out of the chaos. In Genesis, the creation story itself is a sign of hope in that the creative work of God restores order to a world that spins beyond our control. Healthy rhythms take time and require practice and rest. The following are ideas to consider as families intentionally form new rhythms, in close quarters.

### LEARNING RHYTHMS

Has your child finished the school’s weekly packet of worksheets in one day? You probably will not find much comfort in knowing that many “homeschooled” grade-schoolers complete their daily schoolwork **in less than two hours**. First, allow yourself to be flexible in your expectations of schooling at home. It looks very different than a school in a traditional brick and mortar establishment in duration, means of learning, and dress code. Whatever educational curriculum or apps you are provided or find yourself, give yourself time to adjust to what is best for you and your children. Start slowly by setting a regular time and place in the home each day in which “academic learning” will take place for each child.

#### *Try Google Family Link*

Also, with online learning, it is essential to find an application like “Google Family Link.” Apps like this allow parents to limit internet access only to the education platform website and keep our children from wandering into places they do not need to be. They also ensure the child is doing school work instead of playing games, searching the web, or interacting on social media.

### CREATIVE RHYTHMS

We are made in the image of a God who is, among many things, a Creator. Find time to be creative each day. What if you are not so artsy and crafty? There are many other ways to be creative. Cooking, playing an instrument, singing, making a puppet show, or building a blanket fort are all creative activities. Not only are these opportunities to be creative, but you can consider them learning opportunities

### CONTACTS & UPDATES

HDI’s website and social media accounts provide ongoing updates and resources for preparing your church for COVID-19.

Email: [hdi@wheaton.edu](mailto:hdi@wheaton.edu)

Facebook: [facebook.com/WheatonHDI](https://www.facebook.com/WheatonHDI)

Twitter: [twitter.com/WheatonHDI](https://twitter.com/WheatonHDI)

Instagram: [@wheaton\\_hdi](https://www.instagram.com/wheaton_hdi)

for your children.

When your kids ask for screen time, ask them, "What have you created today?" Who knows what we might imagine if we set aside at least 30 minutes creating something each day.

### *Creative ideas for kids*

Arts, crafts, cooking, playing an instrument, singing, staging a puppet show, building a blanket fort

## **OUTDOOR RHYTHMS**

Get outside if you can! Go for a walk and wave at your neighbors from a distance. Throw a ball. Complete a backyard nature scavenger hunt. For people without that option, play "I spy" from your window with the kids each day or guess the color of the next car that will drive by and keep score on who gets it right.

### *Social distance activities*

People all around the world are finding creative ways to be outside with their neighbors while still maintaining their distances. The dozens of people singing together from their balconies in Italy set an excellent example for us to follow. For the birthday of an elderly grandmother, her family threw her a parade on her street. Family members and friends drove by her home in separate vehicles decorated with birthday greetings and balloons as she watched from her front porch.

## **CONNECTING RHYTHMS**

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25). We are better together! While we may not be able to be with one another physically, we are fortunate to live in a time when we can still be together through technology. Setting a time to connect with others as a regular part of our days and weeks will help keep us from becoming discouraged and feeling alone.

### *Connect safely online*

Be intentional about staying connected by picking an extended family member or friend to video chat with as a family each day. Especially think of those friends who are quarantined alone. Join your church services live or connect with small groups of friends to go through a book or Bible study together each week online. Play games or host a theme party using an online group meeting application.

### *Facebook Messenger for kids*

Facebook Messenger Kids is a fun "safer" option for younger kids to chat with their friends. My youngest daughter once played barbies with her friend via a video chat. While our daughter's book club cannot be in person, they plan to meet using Google Hangouts on the previously set date and time.

### *Yard clean-up*

Pick up sticks in your elderly neighbor's yard, and find ways to help from a distance. Many neighborhoods are writing encouraging notes to one another with sidewalk chalk messages and drawings. We may feel lonely, but we are not alone.

## **ACTIVE RHYTHMS**

Find some time to move each day! It can be very tempting to sit on the couch streaming movies all day, but for our minds to stay healthy, our bodies need to move. Many fitness groups and coaches are hosting online (free) workouts with no equipment required. Be active and connect with others by doing online group classes or participating in a group fitness challenge.

### *Make time for daily exercise*

If you find no interest in an exercise routine, simply set a time to go for a walk each day or host a daily dance party in the kitchen. Turning up the music and dancing with your children will not only help your heart stay healthy, but it can help your hearts remain connected as well.

## PROJECT RHYTHMS

In Genesis one and two, God created humanity to have a purpose: from naming the animals to plowing the ground to taking charge and caring over all of creation. If you are stuck at home, take charge of what is given to you. Hang the pictures. Organize the closets. Rearrange the furniture. Write down all the things that have been on your "list" for years, and check off a few items each day.

### *Establish chores for kids*

This is a great time to implement daily chores. Small goals give children a sense of responsibility and security.

## SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

Changes often require clergy and church staff to think outside of the box, but COVID-19 requires the church to now actually exist outside of the building. Without the option to physically gather with one another, family units will need to be intentional in establishing spiritual rhythms.

### *Incorporate with other rhythms*

Infusing new spiritual rhythms may be awkward for some at first, but we can incorporate them into the habits we already discussed. For example, to help your children learn cursive or practice their handwriting, ask them to pick a verse for the week to write each day. When they show you their work, talk about why they chose that verse. As you spend time outside, express your awe of God's creation and ask them what impresses them the most in the nature around them.

### *Worship together*

While pastors share sermons via livestream or recording each Sunday, gather as a family before logging in online to sing a few favorite worship songs together, and allow your children to lead in prayer or even make announcements.

### *Practice rest and gratitude*

In Genesis, God created intentional rhythms with six days of creation and a seventh day for rest. Sometimes we envision God taking one giant, holy nap on the Sabbath, but the text indicates that God's rest was not sleeping. On the seventh day, God took "delight" in creation. During this season we may surely nap, but it will also serve us well to establish a rhythm that includes space to take delight and to recognize the good around us. Asking our children to make a daily list of three things for which they are grateful or creating a big "Gratitude Board" for anyone to write on will not only remind us of God's presence, but also will reduce the stress of this time.

Beginnings can be difficult. All of humanity struggles with us to form new rhythms from the chaos of COVID-19. We take comfort as co-creators with God that new rhythms will arise.

## Sources:

Colbey Penton Sparkman, M. Div., serves as a professional consultant and writer, helping people discover their strengths and work more effectively with others. She is the co-author of *Team-Building Activities for the Digital Age: Using Technology to Develop Effective Groups*. Visit [pregnantpastor.com](http://pregnantpastor.com)