



A GUIDE TO

*Parenting in
the Next Normal*

Moving Beyond the Pandemic

Parenting in the Next Normal

What comes next for our families after the pandemic?

The ongoing pandemic has made parenting exponentially more challenging. Due to the added health risks with every change of protocol, the situation leaves us still at home, overtired, with disruptions in our usual routines at school and work. Ultimately, this in-between setup, along with the unpredictability it brings, has persistently taken its toll on the physical and mental wellbeing of many families, both children and adults alike.

What was once the new normal has become our norm. So what comes next? Parents always want to be prepared for the future, but with the present circumstances, it's difficult to figure out the next step.

At a time when so many things are asked of us, it is essential to go back to the basics of parenting. We let go of the hopes of things “going back to normal,” regroup, and forge our own path. **This is where intentional parenting comes in.** It is an approach that cultivates a healthy, safe, and nurturing relationship between parent and child in all aspects.

This guide is an invitation for parents to reexamine their day-to-day lives and see where we can live more intentionally. What are our family values? Where can we reallocate our time and energy to stay true to them? And more importantly, what impact are we making in our children's lives? This holistic approach informs our decisions and commitments that affect our entire family.

The insights presented in this guide come from professionals in the fields of healthcare, education, and child development gathered from the edamama Online Family Expo held in August 2021. This guide also includes anecdotes and quick poll results from Filipino parents.

Prioritize Mental Health

It's in our nature as parents to burden ourselves a lot. We are the primary caregivers, homemakers, and teachers – all while working from home. We often feel isolated with mom guilt, anxiety, and fatigue. How does intentional living come into play? By **choosing to prioritize mental health**, we erase its being “taboo” and set an example to our children that it's okay to feel negative emotions. While this is easier said than done, here are some steps we can take to care for our mental health:

- **Assess how you feel and accept these emotions.** Mom guilt is rooted in overwhelming fatigue yet feeling like we're not doing enough. Psychologist Raffy Inocencio of Better Steps Psychology reminds us to sit with our emotions, then take a step back and stop blaming ourselves. We must give ourselves credit for trying our best. Reaching out to our own mama tribe also helps to remind us that we are not alone. “It helps us get over the shame or self-doubt that settles in,” he adds.
- **Ask for and accept help.** A common cause of parental burnout in mothers is trying to *do it all*. But we must remember that asking for help is not a sign of failure. In some cases, such as single-income households or for single moms, this is an unfortunate necessity. However, help is an available option from family members or friends. For mothers with present partners, it also makes way for them to play a more active part in child-rearing. And if it is all still too much to bear, know that professional help is within reach.
- **Remember that self-care is not selfish.** Even if it's just a couple of minutes a day, find time to tend to your physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs. Just as flight attendants instruct us to fit our own oxygen masks before helping our children put on theirs, we must nurture ourselves to nurture our family.

“**There is courage in being vulnerable**, and that is a life lesson we want our kids to learn,” says Michelle Tambunting, co-Founder of Young Creative Minds Preschool. When we try to be perfect, we send that message to our kids unconsciously— as a result, they too will feel the need to be perfect. By intentionally prioritizing our mental and emotional state instead of hiding them, we create a safe and open space to talk about them.

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- Michelle Tambunting

Make Home Your Child's *First School*

While some countries have gone back to face-to-face learning, the Philippines isn't ready to take that leap. Educator Nicole Concepcion-Inocencio predicts that it won't be an option for at least the next two years. What does that mean for our children's education?

Online classes are to remain the norm for the near future, but options aside from formal schooling have become more mainstream. Dr. Donna Simpao of the Homeschool Association of the Philippine Islands (HAPI) noted that in homeschooling, "The parent takes on the full responsibility of overseeing the education of their children." But regardless of the form of education, parents are now more involved.

How do we integrate ourselves as the lead facilitators of our children's learning? Here are some factors to consider:

- **Alternative forms of education are available.** Formal online classes can prove to be more difficult than necessary for some children. With school taking place at home, options like homeschooling, Montessori learning, modular learning, and unschooling are forms of education that could better fit our child's way of learning.
- **Child-led learning can serve as a guide to enriching their education.** Because of our situation, we have more time to observe our children as students not only at school, but in life. We are able to take note of how they learn, how they process information and solve problems, and what reinforcement works for them. This may inform our decision of what form of education would be best, or of how we could supplement formal schooling.
- **Our role is facilitator, and not necessarily teacher.** Assuming the role of teacher is daunting for many parents, who are also working remotely on top of their responsibilities at home. Childhood Development Consultant Dr. Angel Dy said, "Children will only learn something if you give them the opportunity to actually learn it." More than teaching them planned lessons, our role is to act as a guide and trust their instincts to consume the resources before them.

At the end of the day, we go back to the idea of being an attentive and intentional parent— we revisit what education means to us and take a step back from what is traditionally done.

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- Dr. Donna Pangilinan-Simpao

Poll results of parents on homeschooling:



Embrace *Hybrid*

Many fields have now come to realize that doing things from home actually works. Which is why in the next normal, many companies, organizations, and schools are planning to **go hybrid**, in which remote set-up is complemented with face-to-face interaction. This new form of work, learning, health, and wellness may possibly be a norm in the years to come.

Going hybrid could mean a lot of adjustments, given the limitations working from home could bring. These include smaller spaces to work for the entire family and added responsibilities for parents to monitor their children. However, it can also bring about opportunities, such as being able to spend more time with one another and getting more things done while at home.

Healthcare and Medicine

As far as medical help is concerned, face-to-face consultations for physical examinations are still necessary – especially for developmental screening from infant to toddler ages as well as emergencies. However, it is still best for parents to limit bringing their children to congestion-prone areas like hospitals and clinics. Teleconsultation is now a viable alternative for minor concerns, lab results and follow-ups after physical consultations. Drive-thru vaccinations and scheduled home visits may also possibly be arranged with your pediatrician. Moreover, parents are welcoming supplementary skills with open arms, taking more interest in First Aid guides at home.

Education and Learning

Once people and industries begin to adjust to the next normal, hybrid education will bring about expanded opportunities for children, including modular learning. After being at home with limited social interaction with other people their age, hybrid education now allows them to socialize with their peers. This now encourages collaborative learning and allows them to develop their interpersonal skills.

However, educator Nicole Concepcion-Inocencio reminds parents that adults can be a source of interaction for children, too. In fact, as their primary caretakers, it is the parent-child relationship that moulds how children interact with people outside of their household.

Teacher and founder of Present Parenting Solutions Liway Tayag also shares that being present and intentional when interacting with your children through quality time instills values on them that help them become better people altogether.

Moving Beyond the Pandemic

The edamama Online Family Expo opened up the conversation about the importance of intentional parenting in the next normal. While it does not give clarity on what to expect, it does prepare us with a shift in perspective that ensures the wellbeing of our family and ourselves, no matter what comes next. **By showing up for our kids rather than passively being there, and by responding to their physical and emotional needs as well as our own, we choose to be present and intentional in our everyday lives.**

However, we acknowledge that there are many more questions to be answered. edamama aims to prolong this conversation to help mothers and fathers embark on the journey of parenting as we move beyond the pandemic. We're all trying to navigate through what's about to be the next normal. We continue this conversation not only to show support to fellow parents, but to continuously question and unlearn the traditional ways we believed to be the *only way*, to pave our own path with our family in mind amidst a life-altering pandemic, and find the everyday joy in parenting together.

ABOUT EDAMAMA

edamama is the first integrated digital platform for mothers in the Philippines to shop the best products, services, and experiences in one place while discovering authentic parenting content and advice.

Established in May 2020, we are backed by leading investors and run by a team of mamas and kids-at-heart with a diverse background in e-commerce, content, and tech.

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