

MUM-OF-FOUR WHO HOMESCHOOLS PERMANENTLY GIVES TIPS FOR PARENTS FACING CORONAVIRUS AND SCHOOL CLOSURES

With lots of parents facing their kids being taken out of school due to coronavirus, she wanted to pass on her experiences about making sure your children continue to learn at home.

In a post on Facebook, she explains: 'I thought I'd share some advice, tips and thoughts publicly in the hopes of encouraging and exhorting my fellow parents who are newly and perhaps reluctantly or fearfully embarking on homeschooling.

'Homeschooling is like parenting. Some days will be amazing and you'll be so grateful, other days you'll wonder what you were thinking or why you have to "endure" this.

Keep in mind that your kids may feel the same way. Some days you'll thrive, and others you'll simply survive. Whatever the case, don't do it alone.

'Even if you're quarantined you have the special ability now to call or text friends and family for support or have your kids FaceTime! Message me, even, if you want.

Hawley, from Birmingham, Alabama, US, is mum to a nine-year-old, seven-year-old, two-year-old and nine-month old.

She and her husband took her oldest children out of a Christian private school in January 2018 as she says she felt it was more suited to the way they wanted their children to learn.

The post continues: 'I homeschool because it is about 80% character building (for my kids AND for me and my husband!) and 20% academic.

'I homeschool so that we have time and ability to make our priorities reflected in our daily lives (like reading the Bible and worshipping God together daily, and growing in a deep relationship and FRIENDSHIP with one another, etc.).

'And I homeschool because it affords us a lot of opportunities and joys that one doesn't have in a traditional school setting.'

Speaking to Metro.co.uk, Hawley explained why she created the list for parents who are suddenly homeschooling, which has been shared over 1,000 times already.

She says: 'My hope was that in sharing earnestly what has helped me (and what is currently helping me, or I WANT to help me!), I might be able to help others.

'I've been so grateful for the support and friendships I've found in the homeschool community and having my kids home so much more, and now literally even having more kids, has pushed both me and my husband to stretch ourselves more.'

Hawley admits that she has found homeschooling difficult this year so she feels for parents who are doing it with limited preparation.

She adds: 'We are deeply grateful and yet this year has been a very hard year for me, homeschooling wise, of feeling quite overwhelmed and seeing my failings so clearly and our strengths less so.'

'I suppose my writing the post was inspired because I know how overwhelming and discouraging it can feel even when homeschooling is what you have chosen and felt compelled to do.'

So I can only imagine how much MORE overwhelming and discouraging it may feel for those who had maybe a week's notice if they were lucky, and no time to warm up or read up on the idea, and no one to help.'

HAWLEY'S 10 TIPS:

1. Spend time outside. Every day, no matter the weather. It doesn't have to be long. Have your kids play in the mud or splash in the rain, throw snowballs or go on a walk. It will be good for everyone's health! If you really can't manage much, stand on a porch or balcony or open a window for 10 minutes.

2. Limit screen time Use this VERY sparingly and only after completing tasks or as a last resort. At least for us, it almost always results in peaceful focused kids who bicker and fight afterwards, and are generally LESS happy after TV. When possible, redirect them to educational or uplifting screen activities.

3. Find focused activities Build forts, play games, complete puzzles, or read aloud as kids colour and build with legos, etc.

4. If you or your kids are grumpy, CHANGE IT UP. Eat a snack. Drink water. (Parents? Have some coffee!) See step 1 again.

5. TWO RESPONSES When you want to respond negatively, ask yourself what you want to say/do that you know isn't great. Then ask, "if I were a good parent, what would I say/do?" And try that response instead OR Consider how you would feel or what might be going on in your child, and try to respond the way you would want to be treated. Apply the golden rule here. Children are people, too.

- 6.** Try to find joy and opportunity in this extra time with your kids What do you enjoy? Share it with your kids. What do they enjoy? Try to share in their enjoyment and come alongside them. Take time to SEE, RESPOND and BE PRESENT with them in a way you haven't been able to before.
- 7.** If you have multiple kids, encourage them in their relationships and friendships You might even consider small \$ payments as rewards for gracious, kind play with a sibling.
- 8.** If your kid asks you ANY question, run with it! Look up how bridges work, make a meal from a country they're curious about, find out more about plants in your yard or area, research why birds sing and how their songs differ... Whatever they're curious about, take it seriously and add on to it!
- 9.** Don't let your kids talk over one another It's obnoxious. Set clear boundaries and set a routine and schedule – especially for eating. If old enough, have your kid contribute with washing dishes, clothes, cleaning up, etc. if they don't know how then teach them.
- 10.** Try not to whine Yes, you. Your kids WILL whine at times. It helps if we catch ourselves when we're having an attitude because our kids will reflect it back! Try to have a positive outlook and encourage your kids rather than nag or belittle them with your frustrations/disappointments.
*currently struggling with this myself but it helps to name it.