
Office of Student Support

Working From Home as a Parent/Caregiver

Caring for someone while in school, and possibly while working, can be a major challenge. We hope you will find this document helpful as you navigate your time at Columbia SPS as both a student and a caretaker. See below for recommendations, resources, and links as you come up with a plan that will be manageable for you.

1 Communicate Circumstances

Communication is an essential part of being a student, family member, and employee. Letting your supervisor/professor/classmates know what you're working on and potential challenges in your work space may allow you more flexibility when running up on deadlines.

For tips on having an expectation setting conversation with your boss visit:
bit.ly/talktoboss

Proactively communicate with family members about ongoing assignments and upcoming deadlines in order to set expectations about your time, especially when the workload is expected to be higher (eg. during midterms and finals). This might also mean clearly communicating boundaries during busier times and asking for help from partners, parents, or friends.

If possible, designate a specific area as your work space and communicate with household members that, when you are there, you are “working” and should only be disturbed in case of emergency. You might try to physically designate the space by choosing a bedroom, closet, or even putting tape on the floor as a boundary. If you can't do this, wearing noise cancelling headphones can serve as a visual cue that you are working while minimizing audible distractions.

Office of Student Support

2

Build a Realistic Schedule (For Yourself and Those You Care For)

Create a schedule that allocates time to care for a loved one, but also allows time for classes and assignments. Share this schedule with others in your home and ask that everyone respect the boundaries for the time you have set aside to study. Try to anticipate upcoming busy periods at work, at home, and at school, and plan ahead. It may be helpful to look at your course syllabi at the start of the semester and make note of major assignments; mark these on a calendar you check regularly so you're aware of upcoming workloads. And don't forget to factor in prior commitments that may impact your daily work/study schedule such as weddings and vacations!

Be honest with family and friends that your commitment to school may mean limiting social engagements. Give yourself flexibility and if your schedule needs to change, try to re-allocate time for school so that you do not fall behind.

You can print out a weekly schedule here: bit.ly/timemgmt1440

You can see a sample weekly schedule here: bit.ly/sampletimemgmt

Using a weekly schedule like the above, plan time each week for class, reading, completing assignments, studying, and participating in forums. Commit to making your online coursework part of your weekly routine, and set reminders for yourself to complete these tasks.

Office of Student Support

3

Scope Out Resources

In addition to resources through Columbia (and possibly your employer and your community) there are a slew of online resources that are readily available to you. Columbia employees can visit the **Office of Work/Life** to learn more about benefits through C.U. See below for more tools and resources:

Learning and Fun for Kids

A mix of educational and fun activities for parents with children:

bit.ly/cucampuslab

Nasa Kids Club

bit.ly/kidsclub1

Art Projects for kids of all ages

bit.ly/kinderartproj

Bill-Nye for Kids

bit.ly/billnyeforkids

National Geographic Kids

bit.ly/natgeoforkids

Resources and Advice for Parents and Families

Columbia University Resources for student with families:

bit.ly/cu_forparents

Family Support and resources for students based in NY:

bit.ly/nycfamilysupport

Health, Safety, Wellbeing, Development, Child Care, and Parenting Resources for Families:

bit.ly/childcarenyc

NY State Parent Guide:

bit.ly/nystate_parents

Advice for parents with children

bit.ly/advice_for_parents

Caring for Older Adults

Tips for caring for older adults

bit.ly/adultcaretips

New York State Office for the Aging resources:

bit.ly/nystate_caregiver

Office of Student Support

4

Take Breaks

Schedule breaks for yourself, even if small, amidst your work, studies, and caretaking. Break up the day with time where you can step away and take a moment for yourself, perhaps a quick yoga practice, a chapter of a book, a call to a friend, or just a break to grab a snack. Even a moment to stand up or a short stretch between meetings is beneficial. You spend so much of your time committed to work, school, and family members, make sure you leave some time for yourself.

Taking a Pause

bit.ly/pause_for_parents

Headspace for Meditation:

bit.ly/meditation_headspace

“Calm” for Meditation:

bit.ly/meditation_app_calm

“HIIT workouts”:

bit.ly/hiit_workouts

Beginner Yoga with Adriene

bit.ly/beginner_yoga_videos

Intermediate and Advanced Yoga

bit.ly/advanced_yoga_videos

Free physical or e-books from your local library:

bit.ly/nyc_library

5

Be Kind To Yourself

Taking care of a loved one while pursuing graduate studies is not easy. Add work on to that and things become even harder. You won't always get everything done you set your mind to, and things certainly won't always work out as planned. Try to approach your studies, caregiving, and additional responsibilities with forgiveness and a sense of understanding. You're living in a different set of circumstances, so try not to compare yourself to peers who may not have the same responsibilities as you do.

It's OK if it takes longer to complete assignments, study for an exam, or even finish your degree. Take the time (and breaks!) you need to be successful in your home and in your studies.

For stress management tips visit: bit.ly/ss_stressmgmt