



COMING TOGETHER

DURING

COVID-19

Welcome!

With the coronavirus spreading fast and anxiety spreading even faster, schools are shutting down, churches are closing their doors, and everyone is staying inside. The world seems to be in a state of sheer panic, and no one really knows what to do (except hoard all of the toilet paper). But in the midst of the chaos and fear, there is an opportunity to connect with your kids in new ways and make the best of difficult circumstances.

This document is designed to help you make the most of a seemingly desperate situation. We've included free Axis resources as well as other suggestions for fun activities to do as a family, which we hope will inspire joy in this time of uncertainty. Please take our suggestions or use them to come up with something even better for your family specifically! You know your teens better than we do, so find ways to cater to their interests, and have fun together.

A World in Panic

If your teen's school has closed for weeks, months, or entirely for the rest of the school year, you might be in a bit of a frenzy trying to figure out what on earth your family can do to keep from driving each other crazy. As a result of these closures, so many families are being forced to homeschool, skip graduation ceremonies, stop playing sports, and altogether halt everything that once defined our regular routines.

But despite everything seeming to be going wrong for the whole world, [one woman's experience](#) went viral after she shared the *positive* effects a 48-day quarantine in Wuhan, China had on her family:

Our family life has never been better. Usually one weekend is long enough before I'm ready to send each of us back to school or work. But for SEVEN weeks, we've been home together with very little outside influences or distraction, forced to reconnect with one another, learn how to communicate better, give each other space, slow down our pace, and be a stronger family than ever before.

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We've learned how to accept help from others. During this time, we've HAD to rely on others to show us how to get food and other things we need. People here are so good, and they want to help. It's satisfying to accept the help.

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My prayer life has never been better and my study time has been much more real. I have quiet time that is actually (usually) quiet - and I can devote real time to it. Most days I have so much more time to think, to listen, to process, and to discover. I am discovering the good gifts that God has given me and my family. More than anything, I am bowled over by his goodness at every turn. He overwhelms me with his goodness.

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God is providing so many opportunities for good while we are here, and he is showing us his goodness every single moment.

Responding to a Pandemic

Instead of panicking and running on pure fear, what if we took this time as an opportunity to grow as family units, to find God in the quiet spaces, and to allow the forced stop to be a time to rest and recenter? Here we've offered 34 ways we believe your family can thrive in this chaos, and we hope you take the unique time we're in to create lasting conversations.

- 1. Pray together.** While the world operates on fear, let us operate on God's strength in peace. There are a lot of scary things happening right now, and it can leave us wondering "what on *earth* are we supposed to do?" Sometimes, the best thing we can do to help our kids (and ourselves) is to sit down and pray together, grounding ourselves in something far greater than any virus. Set an example for your kids that when we experience anxiety over something that's completely out of our control, we're free to bring those anxieties to God's throne, giving Him *complete* ownership of our fears, stress, and health. To help guide your time, check out [The Daily Office](#) app for daily Scripture and prayers to pray together.
- 2. Read our [Parent's Guide to TikTok](#).** If there's one thing teens do when they're bored, it's viewing or making TikToks. Are you still totally lost on what these short videos are? You're not alone! Read this Guide for everything you need to know about it.
- 3. Make a TikTok together.** Now that you've learned about what TikTok is, dive in! You might feel a little silly doing this at first, but it might actually be really fun! If your teen is an avid TikToker, they've definitely seen some bangin' [family combos](#). Let your kid teach you a dance and have fun with it! You might just go viral because you're so talented.
- 4. Have a device-free night.** Okay, your kids may not love this at first, but we think it'll pay off if they can go with it. Keep reading for ways you can have a fun family night, totally device-free.
- 5. Just Read.** Nothing invites your children out of their own story and into the larger world like a great book. Encourage them to read [The Diary of Anne Frank](#) or Corrie Ten Boom's [The Hiding Place](#) to help them realize others have had to hole up in one building for far scarier reasons.
- 6. Have a cook-off or bake-off.** What do we do when we're bored?! Eat! Grab some ingredients from the pantry and/or fridge and get cookin'. If

your family is a fan of cooking shows like *Chopped*, make it a competition. Parents vs kids—now *that's* a show we'd pay to see.

- 7. Have a game night.** Games are one of the best ways to bring families together because you don't really have to talk about anything boring, or school-related, or serious, you can just have fun! Grab your favorite board/card game, or try something new, like, [Pandemic](#), [Fish Bowl](#), or [Spoons](#). Another hilarious game to play is Nouns. Here's how it works: each player chooses a noun (and don't pick a word like "pencil," make it something funny), then one player starts the game off with a sentence containing their noun. The player then passes it on to the next person, who says the same sentence aloud, but replaces Player 1's noun with their own word. The object of the game is to keep from smiling the entire time (hence, choosing a funny noun so you can trip someone up and make them laugh). If you smile, you're out, and the last person frowning wins.
- 8. Watch this [expert interview on anxiety and depression](#).** Take 30 minutes to hear Jerusha Clark's perspective on anxiety and depression.
- 9. Plan a trip together.** Yeah, you're stuck in the house now, but it won't be this way forever! Allow your kids to get in on the planning for your next family vacation. Let them be creative and be open to new suggestions! This can make kids feel more respected and valued in the family dynamic, so why not let them have a say in something fun and family-oriented?
- 10. Watch the [Anxiety Conversation Kit](#) together.** What better time to talk about the issues your teen is facing than a quarantine when they've got no place to run?! Just kidding, don't force them into it. In all seriousness, this is a really good chance to watch something together that's going to open up some cool conversation, and maybe ease the anxiety surrounding so many confounding variables of the coronavirus.
- 11. Limit Exposure.** If your teen is glued to social media for the latest, breaking alerts, give them a limit for how much time they can spend online each day during this crisis (utilize [Apple's Screen Time](#) or [Android's Digital Wellbeing](#) for this!).
- 12. Check the Source.** If you or your child are only getting news from Twitter, Facebook, or even your favorite news outlet, find other credible sources that tend to be less biased, like the [CDC](#) or [WHO](#).
- 13. Listen to a podcast together.** What kind of podcast would you and your teen be into? A true-crime podcast? Faith-based messages? Pop culture? Whatever your family's interest may be (or maybe listen to something that just your teen is passionate about), dive into something cool together.

Here's one suggestion to get the ball rolling: A recent episode of the *Reply All* podcast, titled "[The Case of the Missing Hit](#)," (*language*) features the mysterious case of a man living in California who remembered a popular song that nobody else on the planet seemed to recall.

- 14. Have a movie marathon.** There's nothing better than a night totally dedicated to your favorite snacks and movies. Grab some popcorn (or cookies, or ice cream, or whatever you bought before the quarantine) and plan an all-out movie marathon complete with lots of pillows and blankets. Watch your kids' top childhood movies, the *Star Wars* series, *Lord of the Rings*—whatever your family loves!
- 15. Read our [Parent's Guide to Teen FOMO](#).** This is a *really* hard time for our teens because most of them just want to have a normal spring break and get back to see their friends at school. For our seniors especially, the FOMO (fear of missing out) is very real, and can be pretty hard to cope with because they know there's nothing they can do about it. Read this Guide and gather some tips on how you can help your teen through the FOMO.
- 16. Read our [Parent's Guide to Teen Privacy](#).** With everyone quarantined inside of their homes, [privacy](#) is about to become a hot topic in nearly every household. How much privacy should you allow your teen during this time? What's the Biblical view of privacy? How on earth do I handle this when we're all stuck together?! You've got questions, and we're here to ease that pressure a bit.
- 17. Watch our [Teens & Tech Summit](#).** Another topic that might start to cause families trouble is technology. With so much free time at home, screen time might hit an all-time high in your household because it seems like there's nothing else to do. Navigating those limitations and freedoms can feel confusing and intimidating as parents. Check out these interviews with tons of experts in the world of teens and technology so you can equip yourself with the best knowledge in handling this new situation.
- 18. Have a jam session.** No, we don't mean to go grab a bunch of instruments and start jamming out (unless you've got a family rock band, in which case, absolutely do that). Let everyone play their favorite song or album at the moment. *Bonus!* This can open up some great conversations about the music your kids are listening to.
- 19. Take an interest in your kid's interests.** Does your teen love art, photography, video games, makeup, or something else? Get creative and let them show you a peek into their world by asking to join them in one of

their hobbies (maybe such as making TikToks). This is a fun way to spend your quarantined time *intentionally*, by learning about your kid rather than simply waiting for the hours to pass in utter boredom.

20. Play Would You Rather. An oldie but a goodie. Think of some funny questions to ask your kids, and get some strange-but-hilarious conversations going. If you're stuck, here's a good list to start with.

21. Have a "honey roast." Whereas a traditional "roast" focuses on making fun of a person, a honey roast gets everyone to focus on building each other up. Have each family member say something they love about every person in the room.

22. Serve your community. You may be thinking, "Sure, I'd love to help, but aren't we all supposed to be keeping to ourselves right now?" Well, yes and no. There are actually a lot of ways you can help your community while still doing your part in social distancing. Here are a few ideas to get you started!

- Give to your local food bank by opening up your wallet instead of your pantry. That way, you can stay out of harm's way and still enable your food bank to provide for those in need.
- Check in with your at-risk neighbors and loved ones. Do you live near an elderly couple who shouldn't (or can't) leave the house right now? Consider bringing them a few supplies and simply leaving them on their doorstep, so as not to come in contact with them physically.
- Pick up the phone. You may have seen memes on Facebook poking fun at the extroverts of the world who are *not* okay right now. And while some of them are funny, many people may be feeling pretty lonely right about now because they can't see their friends and family like usual, or go to church, or school...If there's someone in your life who you know lives alone, or may just be feeling a bit down, pick up the phone and give them a call. There's power in conversation and encouragement, especially at a time like this.
- Offer to run errands for others. If you do decide to go out, offer to grab a few things at the store, do some dry cleaning, pick up medication—whatever your family, neighbors, or friends may need.

23. Go through some family photo albums. You know that new device your kid has with the glowing screen that stores roughly a million photos? Yeah, we didn't have those growing up. Whip out some of those honest-to-goodness photographs and laugh over old hair do's and baby photos of each of your kids. They might cringe a little, but they secretly love it.

- 24. Watch a documentary together.** With all of the streaming services out there, we've got hundreds of cool documentaries at our disposal. Do some hunting around as a family and find a documentary that looks interesting.
- 25. Do some spring cleaning.** We know what you're thinking, "Uhh, my kid barely picks up his shoes as it is!" True, our kids aren't always the cleanest of creatures, but there's definitely something satisfying about completely cleaning a space, especially when you've got nothing better to do! Have your kid rearrange her room, get rid of all the papers cluttering up her backpack, or go through every item of clothing and decide what, in the words of Marie Kondo, "sparks joy."
- 26. Dream up some dorm room decor.** If you've got a teen who's headed off to college this fall, quarantine is the perfect time to start planning out the perfect dorm room. Add to Cart, anyone?
- 27. Zoom Zoom.** Schedule a video chat so your kids can stay connected with their buddies.
- 28. Have a self-care night.** Get the whole family to do some face masks (yes, even the boys), light candles, eat some of your favorite foods, moisturize the heck out of your face—the whole shebang.
- 29. Watch (and actually participate in) a fun YouTube workout.** Being stuck inside doesn't mean you have to sit around like a family of couch potatoes. Part of staying healthy is staying active, so get some workout clothes on, find a video (you can do short 5-10-minute videos if this isn't normally your thing), and get crackin'.
- 30. Do some family vision casting.** 2020 may have started out a bit rough with this virus, but it's not *all* bad! What are your goals or dreams as a family? What about as individuals? What can you aspire to this year? How can you all come alongside one another to accomplish those goals?
- 31. Build a fort.** Yes, build an actual, blanket-covered, pillow-filled fort. Grab a laptop to play a movie on, get some cozy essentials and snacks, and have fun!
- 32. Camp out in your backyard.** You don't have to go far for some time in the great outdoors! If you have a backyard (or maybe a family member does) grab a tent and go have a memorable family night under the stars.
- 33. Start a grateful jar.** Your kids might find this a little cheesy at first, but it can be a really cool way to center yourself in a time when it doesn't seem like there's much to be thankful for. Grab an empty jar, some sticky notes or scraps of paper, and a pen, then have each member of the family write a thing or two that they're thankful for. Try to make it a point to write at least one thing down each day (or week) and put it in the jar. At the end

of the quarantine, open it up and take what you learned during that time back out into the real world.

- 34. Go outside.** Yes, it's safe to stay indoors and avoid public places, but we could all use a little Vitamin D to shake off the cabin fever. As environmentalist [John Muir wrote](#), "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul." Go for a hike, plan a family picnic, get some gardening or yard work done around the house—whatever you need to do to get some fresh air! Just be sure to avoid areas with lots of people and sanitize well.

We hope this list inspires you to create intentional time with your kids (and helps keep you all from tearing each other apart). Take our suggestions or use them to come up with something even better for your family specifically! You know your teens better than we do, so find ways to cater to their interests, and have fun together in a seemingly desperate situation.

Thanks for reading!

A sudden crisis like COVID-19 is intimidating, and we're proud of you for walking with your family through it. We hope this time inspires growth and deepening of relationships within your family.

We're always here to help if you need anything. Please contact support@axis.org if you have questions or suggestions.