

# Wellness Wednesday



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## 6 Ways Parents Can Deal With The Anxiety Of Remote Learning ... Again

For many families, last spring was a disaster. Here's how to start prepping for a saner, more effective Round 2.

When schools around the country abruptly stopped in-person learning last spring, many parents had one endpoint in mind: September. We'd slog through the Zoom classes and meltdowns and clinginess, push through the summer, and by the time fall rolled around, we'd be able to send our children back to school and reclaim some level of normality.

But recently a growing number of major school districts, from Los Angeles to Houston, have announced plans to start the new academic year online. New York City has said children will be in the classroom, at most, three days a week.

For some parents, the extension of online learning into the fall, as the coronavirus pandemic rages on, is a relief.

For others, it is devastating — and for many, it is a bit of both.

"It is an impossible situation," said Annie Snyder, a senior learning scientist at McGraw-Hill. "There is no good solution. So we have to build the possible out of that impossible."

With September not too far around the corner, here are some practical and emotional strategies to start working on now before we do this all again.

### **Take time to acknowledge your feelings about the spring.**

Some children and some families actually really flourished in the spring; others did not.

Kim Allen, a human development specialist at North Carolina State University, told HuffPost that one of the most powerful steps parents can take at this point is to take the time to sit with whatever emotions we have about last spring, good and bad.

"Parents need to start to process all of those feelings about it," she urged. Tell yourself that what you felt was valid and real, and don't try to simply ignore it.

Allen noted that this can also be a really helpful exercise to do with kids, who certainly had a lot of feelings about the spring. Think of it as emotional prep work for what is to come.

## Make a point to note what worked.

"It's important for parents to think back on what was successful," Allen said. "If you can identify even one or two things that worked really well, then you can start building on those successes."

Allen, for example, said she has a tendency to focus on how hard it was when her teenage daughter's schedule changed constantly last spring. So she works hard to remind herself that her daughter really excelled with shorter class times and an "asynchronous" schedule. That is knowledge the family can use to build a routine that plays to her strengths in the fall.



Jotting down the positives, however small, can help shift your mindset, so you're not just heading into the new school year filled with dread. That's not only important for you, but also because kids follow our example.

"Our tone, our attitudes really will make a difference in whether schools are successful," Allen said.

## Write down a hypothetical plan.

One of the biggest challenges for so many parents heading into the fall is that we have absolutely no idea what to expect, either because our schools and districts haven't released plans yet or because we know things will invariably change. Despite that, now is the time to sit down and map out a tentative plan for the fall, Snyder said.

"The act of writing out a plan is powerful for humans," she said, and that holds true even if whatever you cook up now bears little resemblance to what actually shakes out in the fall. Sitting down to write out a plan is an emotional exercise, not just a practical one.

One way to start is to identify problems you had or that you anticipate having. Perhaps you and your partner need to do a better job of divvying up work shifts. Maybe you need more devices, or you need your kids to stop screaming for you when they can't figure out how to work the Zoom call, Google Hangouts, etc. Maybe you're all in need of your own workspaces.

It's very possible that you won't be able to solve these problems, but it can still be useful to think — creatively — about how you might try, Snyder urged. It's about facing the challenges head-on rather than waiting for them to pull you under again.

## Allow yourself to scrap the notion of a typical weekday.

Again, there are some families who stuck pretty darn close to their typical weekday school and work schedules. But many did not — and for some, that became a real source of stress and anxiety. Both experts said one simple step to take now is to grant yourself and your kids permission to abandon "normal" schedules once and for all.

"We're craving our old lives, and part of that is a normal schedule," Snyder said. "This is another place where I think our kids are really teaching us — that a normal schedule isn't going to be the way things go for a while."

They might sleep late; you might cram in work off-hours. This time around, promise yourself you won't spend too much mental energy fighting those new rhythms.

## **Think about the resources available to you now that weren't there in the spring.**

When schools and child care centers shut down last spring, many towns and cities went into full-on lockdown. With cases surging nationally, many areas are reintroducing restrictions — a cycle that could continue. Nonetheless, there may be more in-person resources available to you now. Think about what your kid really craved last spring (social interaction? physical activity?), then consider how you might supplement it. Are there outdoor sports classes you might feel comfortable with? Could they try a playdate?

Even if those in-person options are out, consider all of the things that have moved online. So many classes and babysitting services have gone virtual, and they've had time to improve. Think about how you might supplement the gaps in your kid's days and care, Allen said, so it doesn't all fall squarely on you.

## **Remember: we have learned a lot.**

Much has been said about how the spring was a failed experiment, but Snyder takes issue with that view.

"It wasn't an experiment; it was an emergency," she said.

**"It wasn't an experiment; it was an emergency."**

- ANNIE SNYDER

We have, all of us, learned since then. Kids now know what it's like to be away from their friends every day and to see their teachers through a computer screen. Parents have some experience trying to juggle work and full-time child care. Teachers have learned a lot about what works and what doesn't for their students. It is still hard, all of it. But the initial shock is gone.

So if you feel yourself starting to slip into anxiety about the upcoming school year, remind yourself that we all know a heck of a lot more now than we did in March. And we can use that knowledge to help create the possible from this impossible situation the next time around.

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# FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI BROWNIES



179 Calories | *PREP TIME: 15 mins* | *COOK TIME: 30 mins* | *COOL TIME: 30 mins* | *TOTAL TIME: 1 hour 15 mins*  
*YIELD: 12 Servings* | *COURSE: Dessert* | *CUISINE: American*

## INGREDIENTS

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 large egg whites
- 1 cup finely ground almond meal, such as Bob's Red Mill superfine
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 cup unprocessed raw honey
- 2/3 cup (2 1/2 oz total) grated zucchini, not squeezed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips

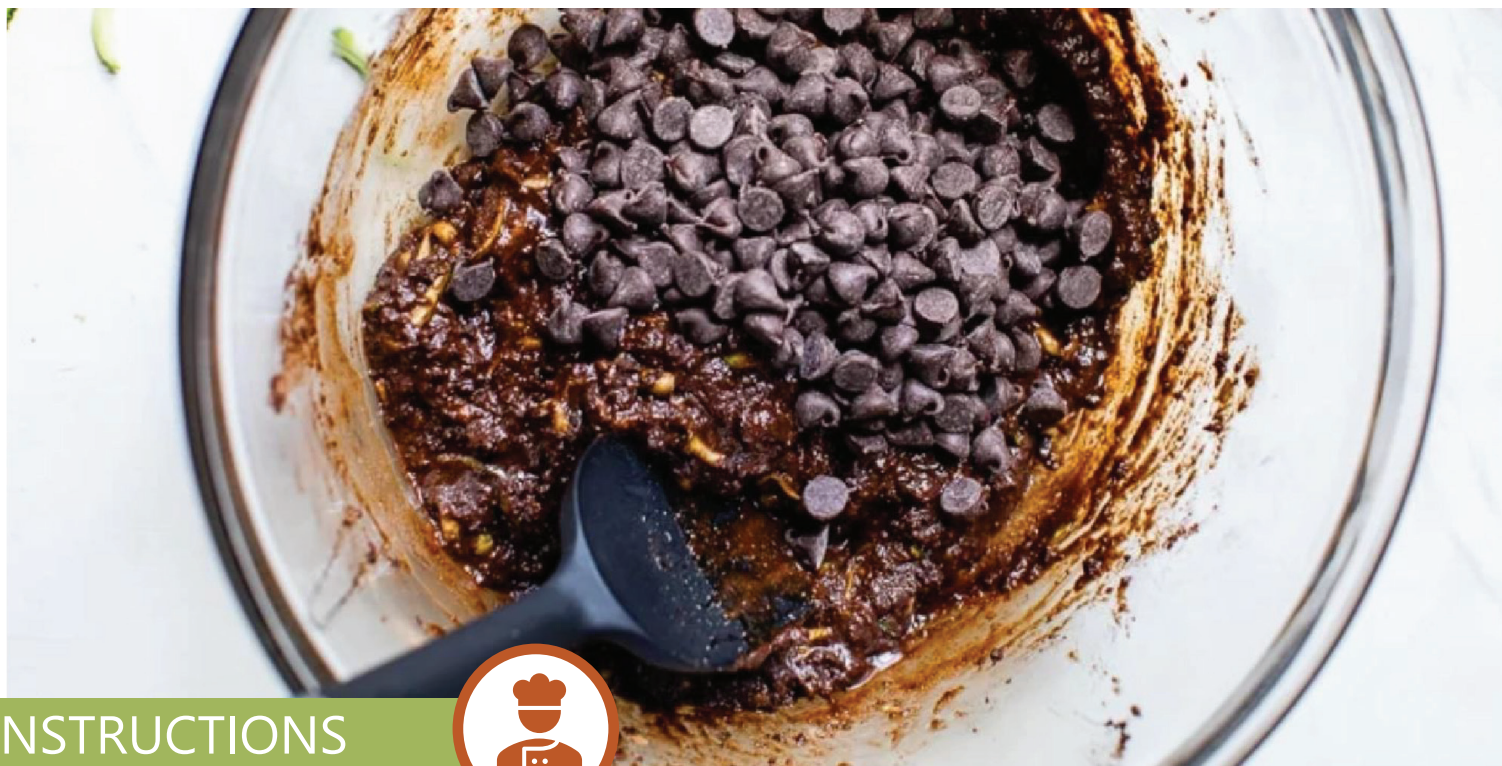
These Flourless Zucchini Brownies are so fudgy and rich, loaded with chocolate chips plus zucchini which makes them extra moist!

## TIPS:

Zucchini is in season in the summer, so I like to take advantage and cook with it often. It's not only great in savory recipes but also in sweet ones. The liquid in the zucchini keeps the brownies moist so that you won't miss the butter or oil. To guarantee soft, fudgy brownies, don't squeeze out the liquid.

## Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 brownie, Calories: 179 kcal, Carbohydrates: 25 g, Protein: 4.5 g, Fat: 9 g, Saturated Fat: 3 g, Sodium: 139 mg, Fiber: 2.5 g, Sugar: 20 g  
Source: [Skinnytaste.com](http://Skinnytaste.com)



## INSTRUCTIONS



### How to make:

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Prepare a nonstick 9 x 9 inch baking pan with cooking spray. Cut a sheet of parchment paper about 9 inches wide, and long enough to form a sling so you can easily remove the brownies once cooked. Place into the baking pan.

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites.

In a large bowl, whisk together the almond flour, cocoa powder, salt, and baking soda. Add the zucchini and egg whites and stir with a spatula. Add the honey and vanilla and stir with the spatula until combined. Fold in the chocolate chips. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan.

Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Let cool about 30 minutes. Cut into 12 squares and serve.

## FEATURED EXERCISE

# Grab your weights— let's get to work!

### Butterfly Shoulder Press

This is the ultimate upper body multitask-er—targeting your shoulders, triceps and biceps! Keep your arms raised to shoulder level to really feel the burn.

Step 1: Standing with feet hip-width distance apart and a dumbbell in each hand, bring your elbows up to just below shoulder height in front of your chest.

Step 2: Open up your arms into a field goal position, stretching them back to activate your shoulder blades.

Step 3: Extend your arms overhead and then reverse the move to return to start.

» Suggested reps: 12 reps | 3 sets



Source: <https://popculture.com/healthy-living/news/17-free-weight-exercises-for-toned-arms/#16>

*Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.*

It all begins  
and ends in  
your mind. What  
you give power  
to, has power  
over you, if  
you allow it.



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