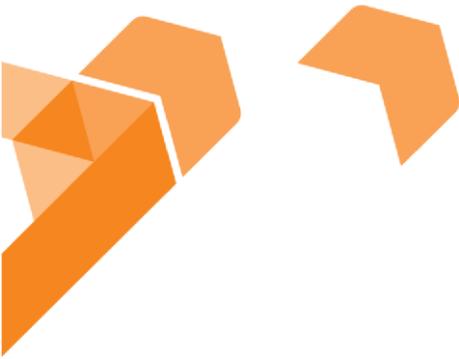


Lockdown & Transition Back to School during Covid-19

Resource Pack for Parents

Second edition



Resource Pack for Parents

For most, the past year has been anything but normal. The coronavirus and subsequent restrictions and lockdowns have thrown people's lives and routines into chaos.

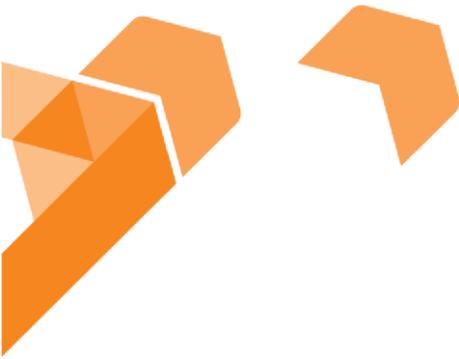
Unable to see extended family, friends and professionals they would usually come into contact with, parents have stepped into all these roles. They have become teachers, counsellors, sports coaches, entertainers and friends, in addition to their normal parenting role. Many of us are not familiar with doing these things and were not expecting them to become our daily work. We've had to adapt to manage them and stay mentally healthy ourselves - and this has often proved extremely challenging.

Nearly a year on, we are still in a state of uncertainty. Many people had expected things to be better by now so it is understandable to be frustrated and disappointed. The everchanging situation brings new challenges and the need for adaptation. The current lockdown is different from the last as the days are shorter and the colder weather may prevent us from wanting to spend as much time outside.

We all have different feelings, thoughts and belief systems. Some children and families might be relieved and excited to be spending more time at home. Some may be disappointed, some might be confused or angry, and some may be very anxious about transitioning back to school. Whatever the circumstances, this period may be tough on your family and you may have mixed feelings about your child returning or not returning to school. You might be concerned about the increase in anxiety, school refusal or challenging behaviour.

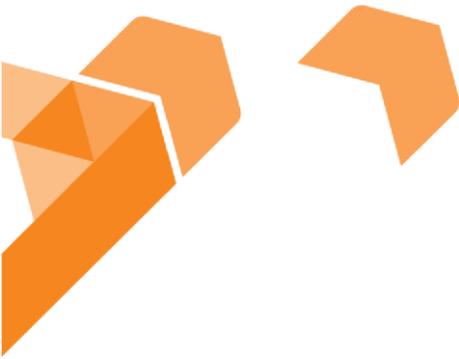
This resource pack has been developed to contain information and resources that may support your family through the transition back to school or with continued home-schooling.

This pack contains individual leaflets; you don't need to read all the information in this pack; simply use the table of contents to refer to the subject of your interest. Most leaflets have references to useful websites, and at the end of the pack, you will find a list of useful organisations and phone numbers for your reference. We hope you will find this information helpful.



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Should I talk to my child about Covid-19?

Short answer: **YES!** Children already know about coronavirus, so don't avoid talking about it with them.

- It is important to be truthful, but remember your child's age. Give them factual information, just adjust the amount and the level of detail you go into so that it is age appropriate.
- Allow children to ask questions: It is natural that children will have questions and worries about coronavirus. Giving them the chance to ask these questions is a good way to ease their worries. It's ok if you don't have all the answers, just say "I don't know but I am here to help you".
- Reassure them, for example, you might say "we haven't all had our vaccination yet but doctors are working very hard on getting it to everyone quickly" , or "a lot of people might get sick, but for most people it is like a cold or flu and they get better".
- Some of the changes, like people wearing face masks, can be scary for children. They are likely to need to talk to someone they trust to help them understand why these things are happening.

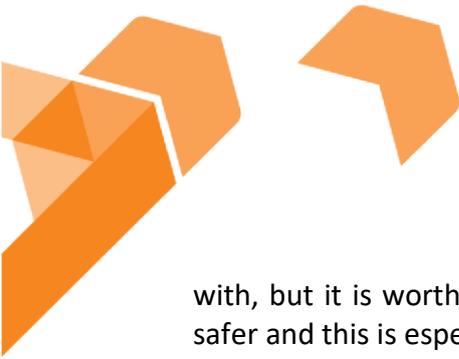
Having difficult conversations with children. It can be hard for families with older relatives, those in high risk groups, and families who usually receive support from services.

If they are going through big life changes, explain these to the children using a calm tone of voice. For example, if they're wondering why they can't see their granny, explain that it is a good thing that granny is self-isolating to keep herself safe and they can keep in touch on the phone or using Skype.

If your child is returning to school, help them to understand the changes that relaxing the lockdown brought to our lives. We know that the journey to school and drop-off and pick-up times have been changed; there will be fewer children in and your child's favourite teacher or friend may not be in school. Ensure your child knows their new routines. You may consider asking the school to send you child's new timetable and request photos or videos to show your child how different the school will look and answer all questions, to pre-empt anxieties. Remember, children are very resilient and they tend to accept and cope with the change much more easily than grown-ups do.

Emotional Coaching

It may be that your child has some worries about COVID-19 (or in general!) that you cannot reassure them about. At times like this, emotion coaching is a really useful way to support your child to handle and tolerate all the uncertainty. This may feel uncomfortable to start



with, but it is worth the effort. When children have their feelings acknowledged, they feel safer and this is especially important in these strange times.

Emotion coaching teaches children the important life skill of emotion regulation, not only will this help them in the present, it will also prepare them to handle challenges they will face later in their lives. Research shows that children who learn about their feelings and emotions have these advantages:

- Feel calmer and learn to self-regulate.
- Get sick less often.
- Stronger relationships with other people.

The five steps of emotion coaching

1. Be Aware:

- a. To support your child with emotion coaching, you need to start observing, listening and learning how your child expresses different feelings and emotions.
- b. Watch for changes in their facial expression, body language, posture, and tone of voice.
- c. Set a good example by talking about feelings and emotions in order to help children build a vocabulary of different feelings.
- d. Encourage children to talk about their feelings and emotions.

2. Connect with your child:

- a. You can use emotional moments as opportunities to connect with your child
- b. Allow your child to have their feelings without dismissing, disapproving or avoiding.
- c. All feelings are **okay**, but not all behaviour is okay.

3. Listen and tune-in to your child:

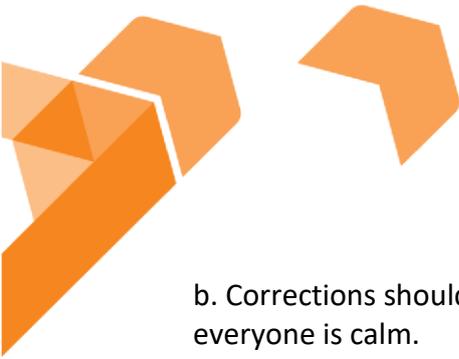
- a. Your child will feel more secure when they are allowed to express their feelings.
- b. Take time to stop, breathe and get curious.
- c. Tune-in to the feelings underneath your child's behaviour.
- d. Take 5 long slow breaths to help you feel calm.
- e. Check what's going on for you. Has your child's behaviour touched a nerve for you? Has it made you feel frustrated? Angry? Scared? Helpless?

4. Name your child's feelings out loud:

- a. Your child will feel more secure when their feelings are heard.
- b. Naming emotions helps to soothe and regulate your child's brain.
- c. Ask, rather than telling, them how they are feeling. If they're not sure, offer suggestions for them to consider.

5. Set limits and problem solve together:

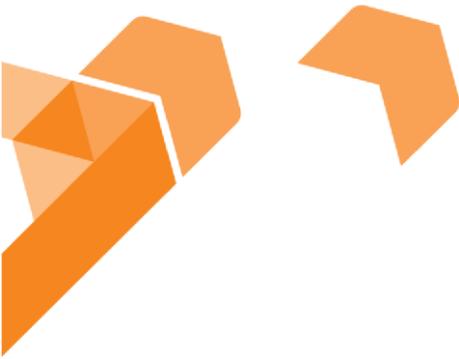
- a. You can allow all of your child's feelings while still setting clear limits on behaviour.



- b. Corrections should only be put in place when feelings have been acknowledged and when everyone is calm.
- c. Where possible involve your child in problem solving, especially as they get older.
- d. Think ahead about tricky and potentially overwhelming situations and be prepared to help child through them.

Website links

- Covibook – an interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing during the pandemic: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- Young Minds - Talking to your child about Coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>
- Place2Be – Guide to helping parents answer questions from their children and to support family wellbeing: <https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-information-for-children/>
- NHS Coronavirus Resources for children <https://library.nhs.uk/coronavirus-resources/children-and-young-people/>
- The mix – essential support for under 25 <https://www.themix.org.uk/>
- Mental Health Foundation, Coronavirus Guide for young people <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/coping-coronavirus-guide-young-people>
- Children’s and parent ‘guide which is for children and young people about the feelings this pandemic might bring up for them These are from Dr Ellie Atkins who is a Clinical Psychologist in ICU at St Thomas’.
 - Children’s video: <https://youtu.be/M5z0GaNTM1g>
 - Adult quick guide: <https://youtu.be/D8GJ3ZOpd44>



Emotional Regulation

How children and young people of different ages may react

All children and young people are different, but there are some common ways in which different age groups may react to a situation like the coronavirus pandemic. Understanding these may help you to support your family. The common reactions to distress will fade over time for most children and young people, though could return if they see or hear reminders of what happened.

For infants to 2-year olds

- Infants may become more easily distressed. They may cry more than usual or want to be held and cuddled more.

For 3 to 6-year olds

- Preschool and nursery children may return to behaviours they have outgrown. For example, toileting accidents, bed-wetting, or being frightened about being separated from their parents or carers. They may also have tantrums or difficulty sleeping.

For 7 to 10-year olds

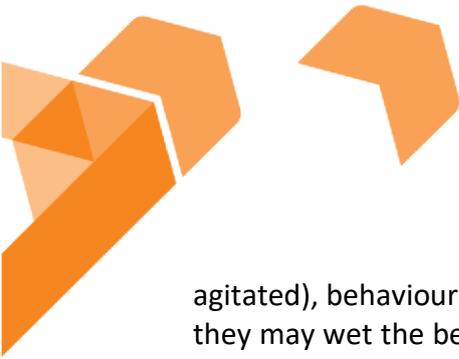
- Older children may feel sad, angry, or afraid. Peers may share false information but parents or carers can correct the misinformation. Older children may focus on details of the situation and want to talk about it all the time, or not want to talk about it at all. They may have trouble concentrating.

For preteens and teenagers

- Some preteens and teenagers respond to worrying situations by acting out. This could include reckless driving, and alcohol or drug use. Others may become afraid to leave the home. They may cut back on how much time they connect with their friends. They can feel overwhelmed by their intense emotions and feel unable to talk about them. Their emotions may lead to increased arguing and even fighting with siblings, parents, carers or other adults. They may have concerns about how the school closures and exam cancellations will affect them.

Helping children and young people cope with stress. We all have a window of tolerance. Our window of tolerance refers to how much we can handle, emotionally, before shutting down or blowing up (emotional states called "hypoarousal" and "hyperarousal" by brain researchers.) Healthy brains in optimal circumstances have a big arch that helps us stay present to listen, learn, and grow, even when situations are difficult. There are some key points you can consider about how to support your child or young person, to stay within their window of tolerance including:

Listen and acknowledge. Children and young people may respond to stress in different ways. Signs may be emotional (for example, they may be upset, distressed, anxious, angry or



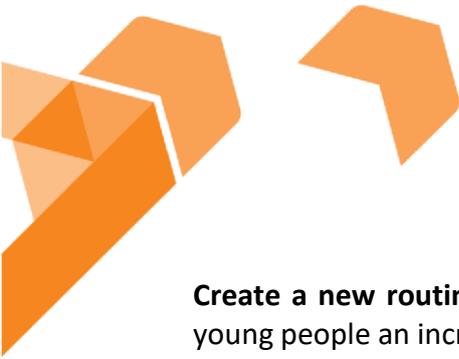
agitated), behavioural (for example, they may become more clingy or more withdrawn, or they may wet the bed), or physical (for example, they may experience stomach aches). Look out for any changes in their behaviour. Children and young people may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Children and young people who communicate differently to their peers may rely on you to interpret their feelings. Listen to them, acknowledge their concern and give them extra love and attention if they need it. [MindEd](#) is a free online educational resource about children and young people's mental health, which can support parents and carers through these exceptional circumstances.

Provide clear information about the situation. Children and young people want to feel assured that their parents and carers can keep them safe. One of the best ways to achieve this is by talking openly about what is happening and providing honest answers to any questions they have. Explain what is being done to keep them and their loved ones safe, including any actions they can take to help, such as washing their hands more often than usual. Use words and explanations that they can understand. There are resources available to help you do this, including the Children's Commissioner's Children's Guide to Coronavirus, or the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) have produced a storybook developed by and for children around the world affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Make sure you use reliable sources of information such as [GOV.UK](#) or the [NHS website](#) – there is a lot of misleading information from other sources that can create stress for you and your family. It will not always be possible to provide answers to all the questions that children and young people may ask, or to address all their concerns, so focus on listening and acknowledging their feelings to help them feel supported.

Be aware of your own reactions. Remember that children and young people often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives, so how you respond to the situation is very important. It is important to manage your own emotions and remain calm, listen to and acknowledge children and young people's concerns, speak kindly to them, and answer any questions they have honestly. For further information on how to look after your own mental wellbeing during the pandemic, see the guidance on how to look after your own mental health and wellbeing or visit Every Mind Matters.

Connect regularly. If it is necessary for you and your children to be in different locations to normal (for example, due to staying at home in different locations or hospitalisation) make sure you still have regular and frequent contact via the phone or video calls with them. Try to help your child understand what arrangements are being made for them and why in simple terms. Support safe ways for children and young people to maintain social interaction with their friends, for example via phone or video calls.



Create a new routine: Life is changing for all of us for a while. Routine gives children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty, so think about how to develop a new routine, especially if they are not at school:

- Make a plan for the day or week that includes time for learning, playing and relaxing
- If they have to stay home from school, ask teachers what you can do to support continued learning at home. The Department for Education have published a [list of recommended online educational resources for home schooling](#)
- Encourage maintaining a balance between being on and offline and discover new ideas for activities to do from home. The [Children's Commissioner guide](#) signposts to some ideas to help fight boredom
- Children and young people ideally need to be active for 60 minutes a day, which can be more difficult when spending longer periods of time indoors. Plan time outside if you can do so safely or see [Change4Life](#) for ideas for indoor games and activities
- Don't forget that sleep is important for mental and physical health, so try to keep to existing bedtime routines
- It may be tempting to give children and young people treats such as sweets or chocolate but this is not good for their health, especially as they may not be as physically active as normal. See [Change4Life](#) for ideas for healthy treats.

Limit exposure to media and talk more about what they have seen and heard.

Like adults, children and young people may become more distressed if they see repeated coverage about the coronavirus pandemic in the media. A complete news blackout is also rarely helpful as they are likely to find out from other sources, such as online or through friends. Try to avoid turning the television off or closing web pages when children or young people come into the room.

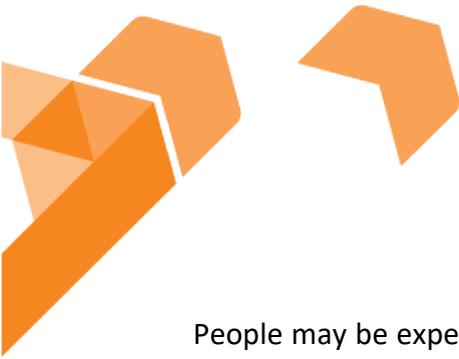
This can pique their interest to find out what is happening and their imagination can take over. Instead, consider limiting the amount of exposure you and your family have to media coverage. Young people will also hear things from friends and get information from social media. Talk to them about what is happening and ask them what they have heard. Try to answer their questions honestly and reassure them appropriately.

Website links

Emotional regulation

To help children with emotional regulation by Dr Karen Treisman

Firstly, please hold in mind, there is no right or wrong. We are all different and going through changes, reflections, and discoveries a lot of the time. We all have different sensory profiles, needs, preferences, pasts and so forth- so, take your time to choose what will be most helpful to you at this time, or none of them at all, if you just need some space or to do something different- there is no one size fits all. There is a menu of options to give some ideas, but there are many more which you might like to try. Be gentle with yourself and others.



People may be experiencing an array of different feelings, and these might be changing and flowing at different times; as well as soaking in other people's feelings and sensations. Here are a few exercises that may help with grounding and soothing:

- **Free videos by Dr Karen Treisman to support relaxation and emotional regulation**

<http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>

- **Hand or star breathing**

A video by Dr Karen Treisman introducing a brief breathing exercise called "hand breathing". It can be used for children and for adults. <https://youtu.be/NAIdSdx-jps>

- **Sensory, grounding, soothing, and regulating box**

A video by Dr Karen Treisman discussing how to make and create a sensory, soothing, and grounding box which supports all of one's senses to regulate. Suitable and adaptable for children and adults. <https://youtu.be/9XyxqWiqLk0>

- **Left and right body breathing** A video by Dr Karen Treisman introducing a breathing exercise which supports left and right breathing. Suitable for older children, teenagers, and adults. <https://youtu.be/MHwiqovPrXY>

- **Rhythm and butterfly breathing** A video by Dr Karen Treisman introducing how rhythm can be used to help to change one's regulation and arousal. Also, this introduces the butterfly hug move which activates both the left and right side of one's brain. Suitable and adaptable for children and adults. <https://youtu.be/e6z6TJ1wQDM>

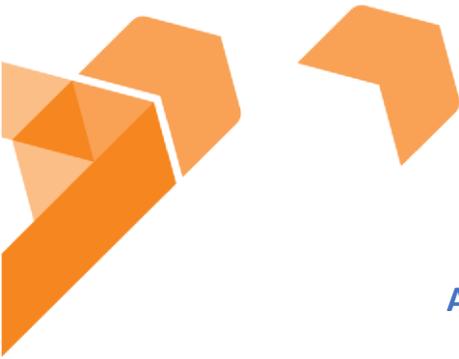
- **Externalising worry through worry dolls, worry plaques etc**– <https://youtu.be/5Q-EoWSJQJg>

- **Soaking in a positive moment** A video by Dr Karen Treisman introducing how we can find a happy, feel good, and positive memory and travel back to it, anchor on to it, and soak it in- including using all of our senses. Suitable and adaptable for children and adults. <https://youtu.be/RRiQixmqcXI>

- **Presley the Pug**- a workbook for relaxation, calm and emotional regulation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhjZHu1MjeY>

- **Creating a Happiness Box**

<https://barrycarpentereducation.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/rationale-for-the-happiness-box.pdf>



Anxiety and responding to frightening events

When faced with any form of crisis, including Coronavirus, it is natural to feel anxious. It's easy to get lost in worrying and thinking about all the different possibilities of what may or may not happen on things that are out of our control. We cannot predict the future or control Coronavirus itself but we can change what we do here and now.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction when we feel in danger or a faced with a difficult situation. It is completely normal to be feeling anxious about Coronavirus. Anxiety effects how we think, feel and behave. When we are anxious, it is common to feel scared, nervous and/or panicky.

Physiological response to anxiety

Our body responds to our worrying thoughts automatically and it can be difficult to control this. Some feelings we may experience include:

- Headaches, tummy aches, urge to go to the toilet, shaky, sweaty, dry throat, hot flushes, dizziness, increased breathing and racing heartbeat.

Why does our body feel like this when we are anxious?

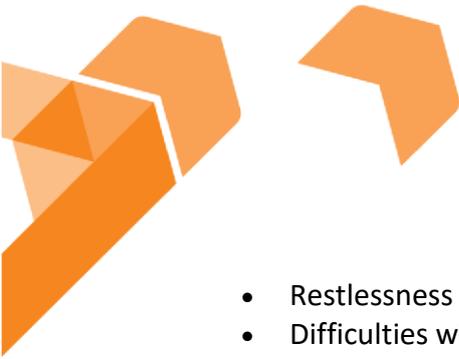
Anxiety can be helpful as it sometimes helps to protect us from danger. For example, if we were to stand on the edge of a cliff without a barrier, our anxiety encourages us to move away and protect ourselves. This is known as our fight or flight response which encourages us to confront or escape the situation by:

- Increasing our heart rate to increase blood flow to our muscles
- Release adrenaline which makes us tremble
- Breathe quickly to bring oxygen to our muscles

The fight or flight response is an evolutionary response from our ancestors. When our ancestors were cavemen, they had to be alert to protect themselves against predators. It was survival of the fittest. Over time, our bodies have created an internal threat system that detects when there is a threat. Instead of predators, modern day threats include spiders, the dark and illnesses including the Coronavirus. When our bodies feel threatened, it releases adrenaline, influencing our body sensations (as above). Naturally as humans, we have little control over this process. However, we do have control over how we respond to frightening events which will be explored.

Behaviour that may indicate underlying anxiety

During times of anxiety, our children may struggle to identify that they are worried or what they are worried about. They may experience the physical symptoms as above or you may see a change in their behaviour. For example:



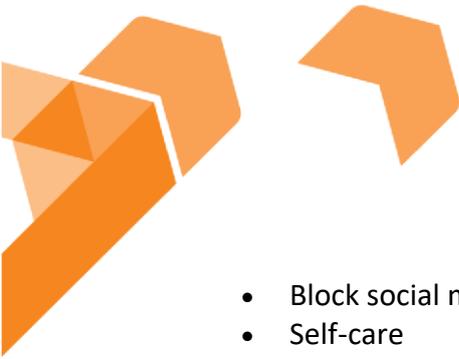
- Restlessness and fidgety
- Difficulties with concentration, memory problems or irritability
- Avoidance, fear of failure, reluctant to attempt schools work or tasks.
- Perfectionism – trying too hard, spending too long on tasks, worrying about making mistakes
- Rigid thinking, catastrophizing
- Tantrums and over reactions to everyday events
- Crying
- Refusing to go to school or meltdowns before school about clothing, hair, shoes, socks.
- Difficulties with transitions within the school, and between school and an activity/sport
- Difficulty settling down for bed

Some anxiety is normal and can be helpful, it is when it is out of proportion or impacting on functioning that it becomes an issue. Also, many anxieties are a normal developmental process (dependent on age), for example:

- Fear of the dark
- Fear of danger, bad things happening
- Insects, animals
- Dying, ghosts, monsters
- Anticipating something bad will happen – parental separation etc.
- Being home alone
- Sickness
- School failure, tests, peer rejection

General coping techniques and strategies that are helpful for worry and anxiety

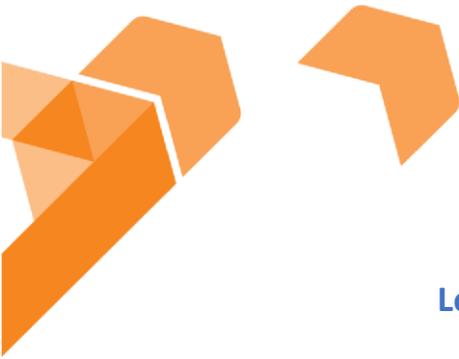
- Worry time. Set aside 10 to 15 minutes in the day to think and discuss your worries. If you find yourself worrying outside of worry time, write it down and focus on another task until worry time. This can be done daily.
- Controlled breathing. Our fight or flight response causes our heart rate to increase. Controlled breathing is an adaptive strategy to control our heart rate.
 1. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
 2. Take a deep breath in slowly through your nose for 7 seconds; both your hands should rise gently as you breathe.
 3. Hold breath for 2 seconds.
 4. Release breath slowly for 11 seconds
 5. Repeat



- Block social media posts about Coronavirus
- Self-care
- Model brave behaviour
 - Children look to their parents on guidance on how to behave, especially in unfamiliar situations. They then tend to copy what their parents do if the behaviour is seen as safe.
 - Parents need to acknowledge and understand their own anxieties and try to contain these when in the presence of their children.
 - Sometimes parents need to act brave, even when they do not feel brave.
- Mindfulness or meditation
- Challenge unhelpful thoughts
 - Negative thoughts can make us feel anxious e.g. “I’m so hopeless, I’ll never do it.” Replace these thoughts with positive ones e.g. “If I keep practicing, I’ll do it.”
 - Express and acknowledge your negative thoughts before thinking about more helpful thoughts.

Website links

- www.youngminds.org.uk – Young Minds are a charity that focus on young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing. The website contains downloadable information leaflets that cover a range of topics.
- Royal College of Psychiatrists – leaflets and advice on various mental health issues.<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/youthinfo/parentscarers/growingup/worriesandanxieties.aspx>
- AnxietyUK – offers support, advice and information on a range of anxiety disorders <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help-now/anxietyinformation/>
- Anxiety Alliance – helping and supporting those suffering from anxiety <http://www.anxietyalliance.org.uk/>
- NHS - mental health self-help guides and information on anxiety
- Hey Sigmund – guide for helping young people with anxiety <http://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-in-kids/>
- <http://carescenter.ucla.edu/helping-kids-manage-anxiety-during-pandemic>
- Binnie the Baboon- a workbook for anxiety, stress, worries, and fears- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWEGxbnNe4E>

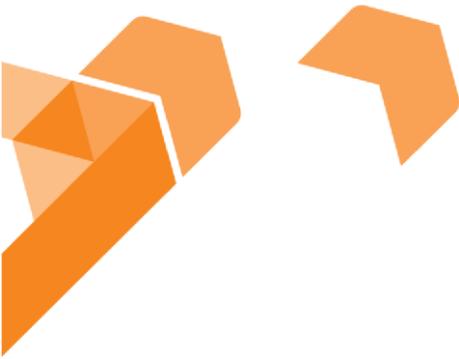


Loss, changes and adapting to the new normal

Change can bring excitement and new opportunities but it is also accompanied by loss. This can affect people in different ways but is usually harder to cope and adjust if the change or ending has been sudden and there has not been a chance to prepare for it. The current situation with lockdown forcing school closures once more was an unexpected and abrupt start to the new year and so many will have experienced anxiety and loss with the change, particularly in the context of uncertainty, increased stress and health anxiety.

There will be many similarities between the losses felt by children and those felt by their parents. However, children have less control and experience in loss and resilience and therefore may cope with this differently causing noticeable changes in anxiety and behaviour.

Parents	Children
*work - job losses, change in routine, balancing work with childcare	*school – loss of routine of attending school, learning, emotional and social development.
*social – not able to see friends and support systems	*social. Not able to see school friends or friends or family in community. Social interaction is key for a child’s growing sense of self-worth and identity.
*Key relationships – Not able to see family, friends, partners who are a key source of support, particularly around childcare.	*key relationships – a parent, family, friends, teachers, counsellor, activity leaders.
*Activities/sports – loss of social, physical and emotional wellbeing that is associated with activity.	* Activities – sports/dance/gym clubs, beavers/cubs/brownies, class parties, park visits, cinema
*freedom – to enjoy regular trips outside and engage in meaningful activities.	*freedom – to participate in their normal routine and enjoy activities
*structure – A loss of structure can reduce the feeling of control and increase anxiety. Motivation and interest can reduce and a feeling of detachment or chaos can arise.	*structure – can lead to a sense of lack of control and increased anxiety which can impact on concentration, motivation, interest, sleep and appetite. In children, anxiety often presents behaviourally. This may be challenging behaviour or a regression in behaviours (i.e. clingy, toileting or sleep difficulties).
	*Rites of passage – Transition groups would normally have participated in activities to mark the ending and prepare for and embrace the change. Other traditional events such as sports day, tournaments, residentials and celebration days are usually in place to mark the end of one chapter and the opening of the next.



Top tips for managing loss

Talking about how we feel. Encourage children to think and express how they feel. Take time to listen to their concerns and ensure they know that it's ok to feel the way they do. This might be disappointment, anger, worry or sadness. These are all normal emotions and our way of processing the loss and adjusting to the change that it brings.

Create a consistent routine. Knowing what to expect will help children to feel more in control and less anxious. This may be different to their old routine but will help them to feel safe in an uncertain time. For example, structuring their day with the same time to wake up, have breakfast lunch and dinner and go to bed. They may have a clear routine of when they do their home learning, free play, screen time and outdoor activities.

Taking new opportunities. With losses comes change and change can be positive; creating new opportunities and possibilities, leading to new learning and growth. It may be a good time to learn a new skill or develop a new hobby.

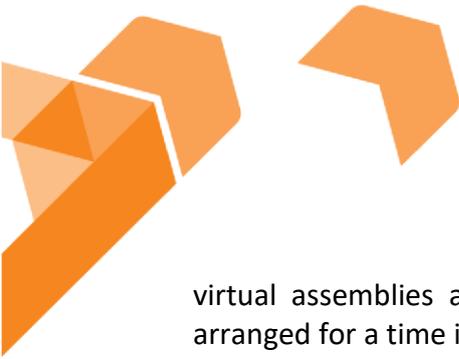
Plan for the future. Having things to look forward to can help to accept the current feelings of loss. It may be that many losses are not lost but placed on hold. Whilst on hold, alternatives could be implemented and opportunities for the future planned.

Transition year groups and 'rites of passage'. Many children are in transition years at school and would have been looking forward to settling in to a new school or celebrating this with their friends. Processing a loss through forms of celebration can help children to prepare for the change and adjust to the new routines and environment. It is important that these transitions are managed well, even in the context of continued school closures, as children are already facing increased stress, anxiety, changes and uncertainty and will therefore be less resilient to coping with these losses. The current lockdown has meant that these rites of passage may not have been implemented in their traditional ways, however alternatives can be.

Top tips for managing change and transitions

Communicate. Ensure that your child is given the space to discuss how they are feeling and be open and honest with them about the situation. Try to validate and normalise their feelings to encourage them to continue to share what they may be struggling with and support problem solving.

Focusing on development and achievements. It is helpful to celebrate transitions and can be helpful to think of them as a time of growth rather than loss. Despite the many rites of passage being more difficult to implement, achievements can still be celebrated with certificates,



virtual assemblies and electronic leaver's books. Other transitional activities can be re-arranged for a time in the future and be something to look forward to.

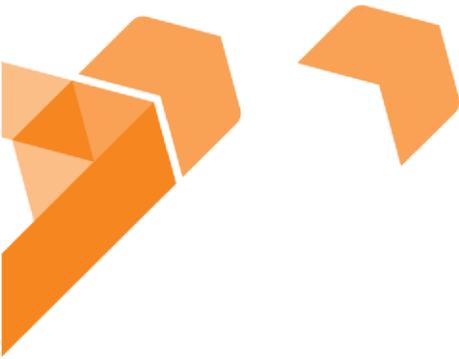
Encourage social connection. Think of physical distancing instead of social distancing. There needs to be a physical space in social interactions but we should continue to encourage social connectedness. Children should be supported to stay in contact with parents, family, friends and teachers.

Embrace alternative transition strategies. To aid transition, preparation for the change is key. Whilst we have not been able to prepare for the ending, we can still prepare for the re-starting. During this time, we can help to build resilience, coping strategies, problem solving and reduce anxieties. There may be alternative strategies available utilising technology rather than the physical strategies previously in place. For example, a virtual tour of a new school environment or new classroom or a peer describing a day in the life of being a student. The new school/teacher could write to your child or send a photo and discuss what to expect. This will help your child to feel excited about the change and valued by the new school and begin to build their sense of identity.

What to expect as we transition back to school and the new 'normal'. For many, anxiety and stress has increased during school closures and the lockdown period. There has been uncertainty surrounding many aspects of our lives and no clear ideas of if, when and how things will change back to how we remember. Many children and their parents will be anxious about going back to school for a second time. We do not know if the rules, routines and expectations in place before Christmas will be the same. Social distancing will be required and therefore children will be kept in smaller groups and asked not mix with other groups. There will be differences to the school day, drop offs and pick-ups, they may be in a different classroom to usual and they may have to take their own lunch and equipment. These are all changes that will require adjustment and may create initial anxiety. It is important that children are supported during these changes to allow time for them to adjust and assimilate to the new 'normal'.

Website links

- Surrey County Council has recently sent out three letters to parents and carers, which are available to download under the returning to school and Early years settings: <https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/advice.page?id=s8d0Hl3q300>
- Top tips for preparing your child returning to school <https://www.rcot.co.uk/preparing-your-child-returning-school>



School Anxiety / School refusal

At times where uncertainty is high, it is understandable to see an increase in anxiety. People often experience some level of anxiety when doing something new, or something they haven't done for a long time. Given that schools are currently closed to most pupils, it is expected that many more young people will experience some anxiety about returning to school, when they re-open and pupils are expected to return. Your child might feel worried about going into school again, or leaving family at home when they go to school.

Top tips to manage anxiety about going back to school

Acknowledge anxiety and other feelings. When talking to your child about their anxiety, ensure that you actively listen, validate and empathise with how they are feeling (i.e. I can see that you're worried; If I was thinking those worrying thoughts, I would feel worried too). Anxiety is a normal response to a sense of threat, and it is important to normalise a child's reaction. These strategies will encourage your child to label and express their emotions, helping them to understand them better.

Acknowledge change Acknowledge change and use transition strategies to help adapt to the loss and prepare for the future.

Recognise own feelings and stay calm Model calm response and hope and limit sharing of own concerns or catastrophising.

Create a safe space to talk Be available to talk and show that you're listening and be curious, attentive and accepting of what they may be sharing. Some children prefer talking when distracted by an activity – like whilst playing games or doing exercise. Regularly check in with how they are feeling to normalise and encourage expression of feelings.

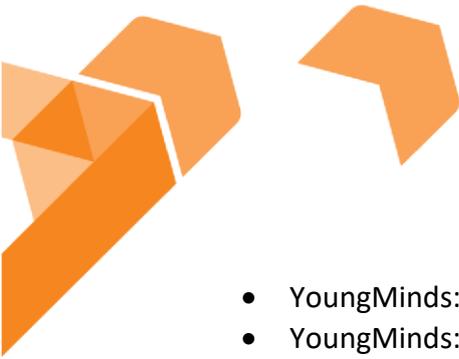
Encourage problem solving and learning coping strategies. This is more helpful for a young person that just providing reassurance. Help them to look at their anxiety from different perspectives and try to reduce stressors in their environment.

Encourage social support and connection. This can help whilst in lockdown but also getting reacquainted with friends and peers in preparation for transition back to school.

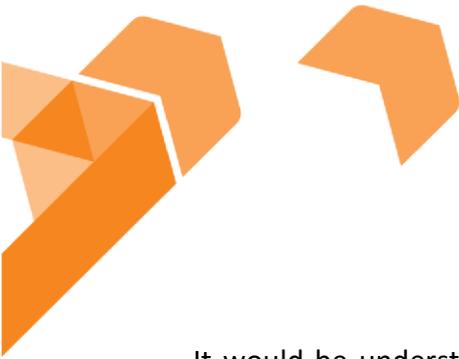
Provide consistency. Provide consistency and routine and ensure a healthy balance between school work and fun activities.

Website links

- [CAMHS Guidance on School Refusal](#)



- YoungMinds: Parents guide to school refusal
- YoungMinds: What to do if your child is anxious about going back to school
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-anxiety/>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/5-tips-to-ease-backtoschool-anxiety>
- YoungMinds: Problems at school
- STEM4: Coping with cancelled exams
- STEM4: Managing time and school work
- School refusal <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/school-refusal/>



Separation Anxiety – Going back to school

It would be understandable to think children's separation anxiety may be reduced due to spending longer periods of time at home with parents or carers however there are some challenges and potential obstacles worth considering as the events move on and children return to school. These include:

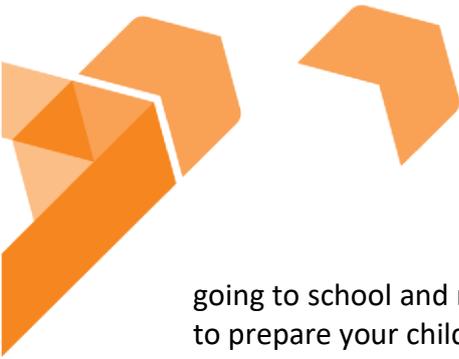
Working from home can be complicated when your child struggles to separate. Children with separation anxiety are often triggered by separation events within the home as well. For instance, your child may become very anxious (beyond what is typical for their developmental level) when you leave the house to take out the rubbish or they have trouble staying in a room or on a floor of the house by themselves. They may feel uncomfortable and become challenging when you can't engage with them when you're on a work call, for example. So even though work from home arrangements are meant to be helpful and add flexibility, it can add even more stress for both parent and child.

Some parents are still going to work, particularly if key workers, and there are parents working in healthcare at the front line of the pandemic. Children with separation anxiety can be particularly triggered when their parents' leave home while they are expected to remain at home. They may feel lonely or frightened without you present and fear that something bad will happen to you while you're away from home. It's not uncommon for children to worry that their parent "will never come back," and to fear loss despite reassurances. The risk that's currently associated with leaving home and the heightened risk for healthcare workers on the front lines within the media further fuels these fears. Also, as a parent who's still working outside the home, you may have fewer opportunities to create distractions, organise school assignments and structure your child's day.

Some parents may be ill. Due to the delay sometimes experienced before confirming test results, individuals who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 have been advised to socially distance from their relatives as much as possible. This is going to be a stressor for any child, not just those with separation anxiety. Having a parent in quarantine and not being able to see them and feeling frightened for them will undoubtedly affect a child and many also struggle with sleeping by themselves at night.

Pros and cons of educational resources and online classrooms. For children anxious about school attendance, it may be more difficult to get these children back in school as they have experienced home learning and possibly become quite comfortable with this option. As an alternative option has become available children may become more defiant in refusing school.

The transition back to school and work can be a challenge. Change is challenging for everyone and the transition back to school after the summer holidays can be challenging enough. For children with separation anxiety, re-introducing the fear-inducing trigger of separation may be especially tough. Children with separation anxiety are more likely to avoid



going to school and may refuse to go back therefore we have outlined some top tips on how to prepare your child for this transition.

Top tips to help your child manage separation anxiety at home and preparing to go back to school

Help your child maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes regular meals, exercise, activity and bedtime routine. Encourage them to avoid heavy snacks and dark television shows or films in the evening hours. Children with separation anxiety are more prone to nightmares and sleep difficulties.

Prepare your child for separations. These are highly unpredictable times, but to the greatest extent possible, talk to your child before leaving home, emphasising that you will come back (and if possible, approximately when). Check-ins by text are okay but should be limited due to unhelpful reassurance seeking (agree on the number of contacts and exceptions to the rule, such as in the case of a true emergency beforehand).

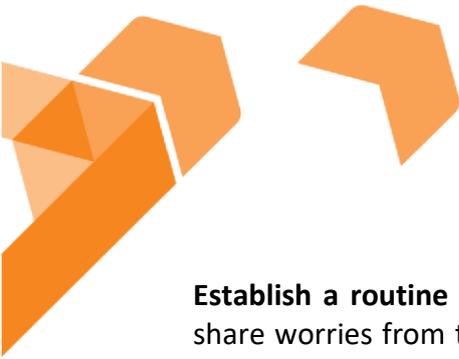
Use creativity and engage your child's imagination. For instance, have a scavenger hunt at home or play hide and seek. This will help prepare your child for moments when you will leave the room to hide or search a different part of the house. Use a visual timer so your child knows how long you'll be gone and then extend the time with each round of the game.

Involve your child in your plans to go grocery shopping. When you're going out grocery shopping, give your child some control by allowing them to help create the grocery list. Explain why they cannot come with you or if they need to come with you prepare them by explaining social distancing rules, some people might be wearing masks which may look scary but it is to protect them from the virus. Warn your child there may be long queues and if you take a while coming home it could be for this reason. You can consider rewarding your child for coping with the uncertainty and waiting patiently for your return or complying with social distancing whilst out by letting them choose a family movie to watch that evening.

Talk about school in a positive way so your child understands they do not need to fear going back. Have conversations leading up to going back to school and preparing your child for what to expect.

Ask how they're feeling and try to accept, validate and normalise their feelings. 'You're right, it is a bit nerve-wracking on your first day back – same for me and work. I bet there are 15 other kids in your class feeling exactly the same.'

Plan activities to do in the evenings and at weekends for the first few weeks, to give them something to look forward to and remind them they will have time to spend with you.



Establish a routine ‘family feedback’ time which makes it normal for everyone to air and share worries from their day, as well as the fun things. This could happen over dinner time and involve questions like, ‘What was the silliest moment of your day? What was the most interesting fact you learnt today? Did anyone say anything kind or mean?’ This also encourages your child to talk about their feelings.

Transitional objects. Parents could introduce a transitional object – something simple and small that belongs to a parent or something that reminds them of home. A transitional object may help some children feel braver because they have something familiar that brings security. Some examples of transitional objects include a special bracelet, keyring, pen, a locket with a picture.

Stories. Story books are a good way to support children with a range of emotional issues. Stories can give a child a framework so they know what to do when confronted with certain situations. Little parachutes website has recommendations for books on anxiety <https://www.littleparachutes.com>

If safe to do so **arrange a play date** with one or more familiar peers before school starts. Research shows that the presence of a familiar peer during school transitions can improve children's academic and emotional adjustment.

Teach your child simple breathing techniques or a grounding exercise to use at school if they feel anxious during the day.

For example:

Hand or star breathing-A video by Dr Karen Treisman introducing a brief breathing exercise called “hand breathing”.

It can be used for children and for adults. <https://youtu.be/NAldSdx-jps>

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- Describe/name 5 things you can see
- Describe/name 4 things you can touch
- Describe/name 3 things you can hear
- Describe/name 2 things you can smell
- Describe/name 1 things you can taste

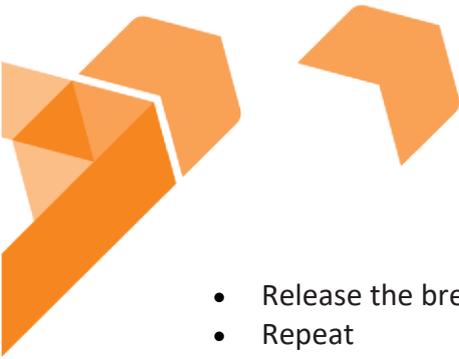
Colours

Find 3 things in the room that are red/yellow/green etc.

Practice breathing

Find somewhere comfortable to sit or lie down.

- Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
- Take a deep breathe in slowly through your nose for 7 seconds; both your hands should rise gently as you breathe
- Hold the breath for 2 seconds.



- Release the breath slowly for 11 seconds.
- Repeat

If your child is feeling particularly anxious it could be beneficial to visit the school and practice the drop off routine before your child returns to school.

You could establish a specific ‘see you later’ area.

Ensure the area is age-appropriate. The place where the goodbye or separation from parent ritual occurs should be age-appropriate. For a child, in the beginning year of school the departure point for the parents might be a specific area such as the ‘see-you-later window’ or the ‘see-you-later step’ at the classroom door; for junior primary it could be where the children line up; and for older students it could be inside the front gate or at the school office. Over time, the distance between the drop-off point and the classroom can increase in incremental steps

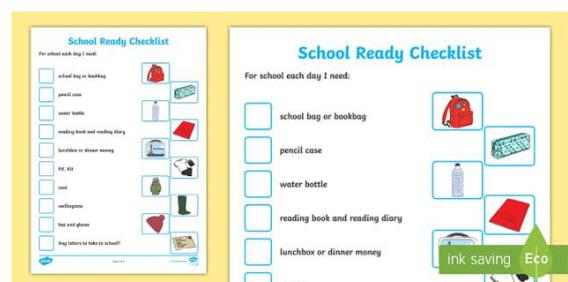
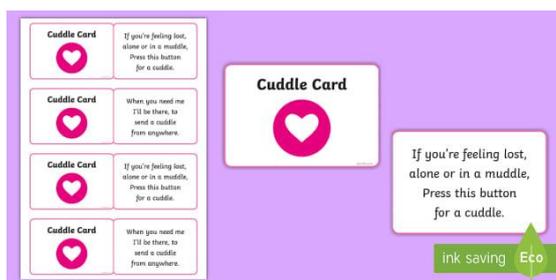
Remember

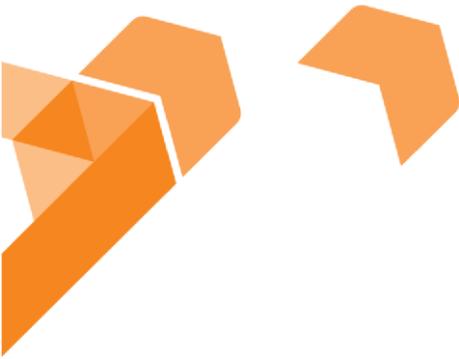
It is important to keep in mind that separation anxiety is common in children younger than primary-school age, so at that age, it may not be a cause for concern. Remember too, that separation anxiety may be situational — the result of a traumatic experience, such as the unexpected loss of a loved one.

With many of us feeling more anxious than usual about the health and wellbeing of our loved ones, it’s important to validate our children’s concerns and offer comfort. All children are more prone to anxiety during this health crisis due to its unpredictable nature and the challenges that presents for putting information from the news into perspective.

Website links

- Separation anxiety COVID-19 https://www.stonybrookmedicine.edu/SeparationAnxietyCOVID19_keluskar_reicher_crowell
- Separation anxiety <https://www.anxietycanada.com/disorders/separation-anxiety/>
- Free resources to use with your child <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/blog/how-to-help-your-child-with-separation-anxiety> For example:





Health Worry and the Coronavirus

During the current Coronavirus pandemic, it is understandable that you might see an increase in your child worrying about their health or the health of others. When children are feeling anxious it might not be clear to you how they are feeling. Children might not always be able to express in words how they are feeling. What we know about anxiety in children is that it could look like:

- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches
- Reassurance-seeking – ‘are we going to be ok?’
- Reluctance to separate from parents – not wanting carers to leave the house
- Moodiness or irritability
- Tantrums or meltdowns
- Trouble sleeping or changes in appetite

In older children and teenagers, you may notice the following:

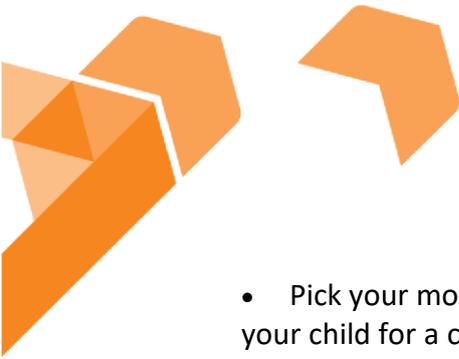
- Always worrying about their health
- Frequently checking their body for signs of illnesses, such as lumps, tingling, or pain
- Worrying that the doctor or medical tests may have missed something
- Obsessively looking at health information on the internet or in the media
- Acting as if they are ill (for example, avoiding physical activities)

Note: Anxiety itself can cause symptoms like headaches or a racing heartbeat, and these can be mistaken as signs of an illness.

Tips on how to find out what my child is thinking and feeling

How to ask your child about their worries and when you ask are important.

- Empathise with your child: A child must believe that you are asking because you want to understand the worries better in order to help them. Using what questions rather than why questions. ‘What are you feeling worried about?’ Before you ask a question you could say, ‘I see you are feeling worried/frightened that must be really difficult’.
- Normalise the problem: Let your child know they are not the only ones who gets anxious. Think about a time you might have been anxious ‘I remember when I got anxious about x...’
- Sometimes children will say they don’t know. You can make tentative suggestions ‘Do you think that you are worried x might happen’ ‘I have been worried x might happen, do you think you are worried about that too?’



- Pick your moment: You know your child best. Sometimes it is helpful to sit down with your child for a chat but for others it might be helpful to ask when you are both doing an activity (when you're in the car, washing up, cooking).
- You don't need to get all of the answers straight away. If you feel your child is losing concentration or getting frustrated stop and try again another time.
- Taken from 'Helping your child with fears and worries' by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts

Top Tips on managing your child's worry about health and the coronavirus

Here are some tips that might help you and your child cope with anxiety and worries which can give you a sense of control even during an uncertain time.

- Make some time in the day to talk to your child about how they are feeling. Allow them to be open if they have fears and seek answers. Do not be afraid to answer your child's questions about the coronavirus or worries about going back to school.
- It is helpful to understand exactly what your child is worried about. Write down the worries and thoughts they are having at the moment. These worries might be around their health and the coronavirus and/or worries about the future and what it might look like. It might be helpful for you to write a list of their worries from what they are most worried about to least worried about. (See table below)

<i>Most worried about</i>	
<i>Least worried about</i>	

- Notice, label and accept what they are feeling. If they are noticing feeling stressed, tense or anxious, suggest they quietly say to themselves 'OK, there's my anxiety again' sometimes putting a label on what we feel helps reduce our concern.
- Setting your child a 'worry time' can be helpful. Decide on the worry time period 10-15 minutes, and use that designated time to allow your child to discuss their worries. Outside of this time, encourage your child to set aside their worries, notice the worry (make note of it, write them down) and use coping strategies and mindful activities to bring themselves back to the present moment (see below).
- Direct your attention and try a grounding technique.



Controlling exposure to the news

Your child may be seeking information around the coronavirus throughout the day, checking on the guidelines and information that they have is correct. It might be helpful to create rules around when and how often your child can seek information about the virus.

- If your child has social media and finds the coronavirus is present on their feeds, you can 'mute' words such as coronavirus and covid-19 on platforms such as Facebook and twitter.

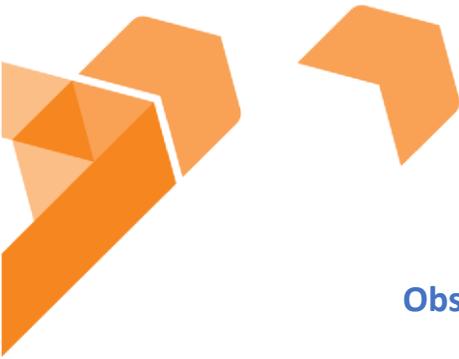
Stay connected

Just because your child may not be able to see friends or family doesn't mean they can't still talk. There are many ways to connect, video chat, instant messaging and phone calls. Encourage your child to reach out to friends and family.

- No matter what their age, it is important to set a routine. Keeping a sleep routine is also really important. (For better sleep top tips refer to our bed time leaflet).
- Notice your own anxieties around the coronavirus. You may have your own concerns which your child may be able to read which fuels their own anxiety or fears. Try to keep your outward mood as neutral as possible but also remember to look out for yourself.

Website links

- Covibook – Supporting and Reassuring Children Round the World An interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing during the pandemic
- Coronavirus recourses for younger children <https://library.nhs.uk/coronavirus-resources/children-and-young-people/>
- <https://nhsforthvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Resource-pack-For-Parents.pdf>
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- Amaze - information pack for parents Child Mind Institute- Lots of resources on supporting families during COVID-19: <https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>
- Educational Psychology Corona Virus pack
https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/surrey/fsd/files/educational_psychology-_coronavirus_covid_resource_pack_1.pdf



Obsessive Compulsive Behaviours and Coronavirus

Because of the Coronavirus, it is understandable that you might see an increase in your child worrying about their health or the health of others. If your child has a diagnosis of OCD or related disorder, you may notice their symptoms getting worse or more intense.

When children are feeling anxious it might not be clear to you what they are feeling. Children might not always be able to express how they are feeling. What we know about OCD in children is that it could look like:

- Contamination fears leading to additional washing/cleaning
- Intrusive thoughts around getting the virus or passing the virus on to loved ones
- Increase in health anxiety/worry about being more vulnerable to the virus
- Worries about not being able to use previously used coping strategies (i.e. exercise) for mental wellbeing due to isolation
- Seeking more reassurance 'Am I going to be ok?'

Tips on how to find out what my child is thinking and feeling

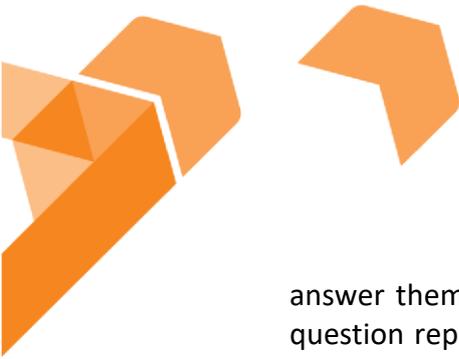
How to ask your child about their worries and *when* you ask are important.

- Empathise with your child: A child must believe that you are asking because you want to understand the worries better in order to help them
 - Using what questions rather than why questions. 'What are you feeling worried about?'
 - Before you ask a question, you could say, 'I see you are feeling worried/frightened that must be really difficult'
- Normalise the problem: Let your child know they are not the only ones who gets anxious. Think about a time you might have been anxious 'I remember when I got anxious about x...'
- Sometimes children will say they 'don't know' why they are worried. You can make tentative suggestions 'Do you think that you are worried x might happen' 'I have been worried x might happen, do you think you are worried about that too?'
- Pick your moment: You know your child best. Sometimes it is helpful to sit down with your child for a chat but for others it might be helpful to ask when you are both doing an activity (when you're in the car, washing up, cooking).
- You don't need to get all the answers straight away. If you feel your child is losing concentration or getting frustrated stop and try again another time.

Taken from '*Helping your child with fears and worries*' by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts

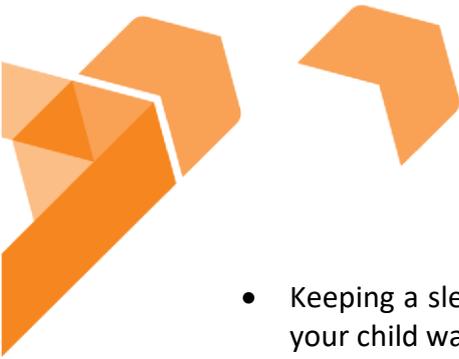
Top Tips for Managing your child's OCD during Coronavirus

- Be mindful of your child asking questions. Not all COVID-19-related questions are OCD reassurance seeking — your child will have questions, and you should be prepared to



answer them in an age appropriate manner. However, if your child asks the same question repeatedly, asks in a pressured way, or needs you to answer in “the right way,” then it is likely OCD reassurance seeking and will make anxiety worse. *Reassurance seeking* is an unhelpful coping strategy used when we feel anxious. Although used to try and reduce anxiety, it reinforces the worries and prevents the person from learning more adaptive and helpful ways of coping with anxiety. Challenging their thoughts or problem solving is more adaptive as it allows them to weigh up factual evidence and find their own solution or balanced alternative rather than relying on others to reassure them.

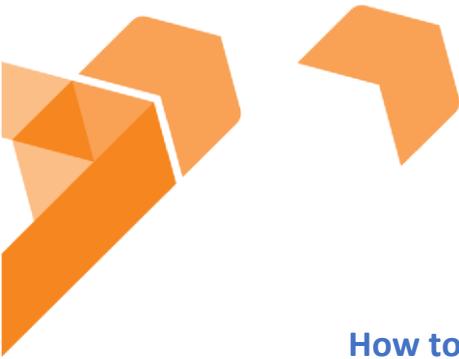
- If your child struggles with contamination fears: Set out a basic safety plan based on the recommendations of trusted health organisations and do not add to it. An example of a safety plan might be:
 - Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after being outside or in public, before eating, after going to the bathroom and after you’ve coughed/sneezed/blown your nose. If soap and water are not available to you, use hand sanitizer.
- If your child struggles with thoughts of harming others: Try to open a conversation with your child around how their OCD might take advantage of coronavirus fears. Often children with OCD might fear that they have infected someone or that they are going to infect someone. Validate whatever feelings or concerns your child might have and provide realistic assurance. For example, ‘Doctors say that the best way to stay healthy is to wash our hands for 20 seconds, so we are!’
- Controlling exposure to the news: Keep an eye on how they may be reacting to the news, being aware that times of high stress might mean an increase in or changing of their OCD symptoms. Your child may be seeking information around the coronavirus throughout the day, checking on the guidelines and information that they have is correct. It might be helpful to create rules around when and how often your child can seek information about the virus.
 - If your child has social media and finds the coronavirus is present on their feeds, you can ‘mute’ words such as coronavirus and covid-19 on platforms such as Facebook and twitter
- Stay connected: Just because you may not be able to see friends or family doesn’t mean you can’t still talk. There are many ways to connect, video chat, instant messaging and phone calls.
- No matter what their age, it is important to set a routine: without distractions some people can find themselves spending more time thinking about the anxieties and worries. Take advantage of this extra time and build enjoyable activities into your day. This could be reading, painting, going for a walk



- Keeping a sleep routine is also really important. Plan a sleep routine including when your child wants to go to sleep, what you will just before going to sleep.
 - Make the bedroom a relaxing plan
 - Keep their room dark, cool and quiet depending on preference
 - Build exercise into your child's day can help them to sleep better at night.
 - If your child finds that they are kept awake by thoughts sometimes people have reported its helpful to listen to the radio, music or podcast before bed.
 - Avoid screen time in the hour before bed, including TV, iPads, mobile phones, computer screens. These use a blue light which tricks the brain into thinking it's still day time.
 - Consistency is key! Decide on a routine and stick to it.
- Notice your own anxieties around the coronavirus. You may have your own concerns which your child may be able to read which fuels their own anxiety or fears. Try to keep your outward mood as neutral as possible but also remember to look out for yourself.
- If your child needs support over the phone or online OCD Action, Kooth, the Samaritans are all invaluable resources at providing support.

Website links

- COVID-19 vs. Your OCD Symptoms <https://iocdf.org/covid19/covid-19-vs-your-ocd-symptoms>
- OCD Action –helpline for support and offers information on a range of obsessive behaviours.
- OCD UK OCD pack for young people <https://www.ocduk.org/teens/>
- Mood Juice free self help guide to Obsessions and Compulsions <https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/pdfGuides/ObsessionsandCompulsions.pdf>
- The national OCD charity, run by and for people with lived experience of OCD <https://www.ocduk.org/>
- What to Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming OCD, book by Dawn Huebner



ADHD Community

How to support your child through the Coronavirus crisis?

Understand your own fears

Be mindful of your own fears about the coronavirus crisis and how this may be unintentionally projected onto your child, which may affect their behavior. Acknowledge your own and your child's anxiety, fear and worry and accept these feelings with compassion. Remember that we are living in uncertain times and that will, naturally, cause justified worry. Try to focus on the facts and learn to sit with the uncertainty, focusing more on hope than fear.

Check in with your child

Ask gently about how your child is doing. If they share that they are worried, scared or have questions about COVID-19, discuss this. Use reliable websites such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and show them what scientists are saying. Try to discourage them from reading social media posts or rumours which may be portraying incorrect and unhelpful information.

Limit news exposure

Seeing images of people wearing masks in hospital wards and hearing coronavirus news reports all day long can increase distress in most people, but particularly those who are already predisposed to anxiety. Try reducing your viewing time in common family areas of your home. If necessary, read news reports discretely on your phone away from your child.

Manage screen-time

Children with ADHD particularly struggle with getting off their screens; gaming and social media is often the way they interact with others. Plan a set amount of screen time for your child each day and allow them to earn bonus time. For example: If they do chores around the housework and complete their work on time, this time can be increased.

Exercise

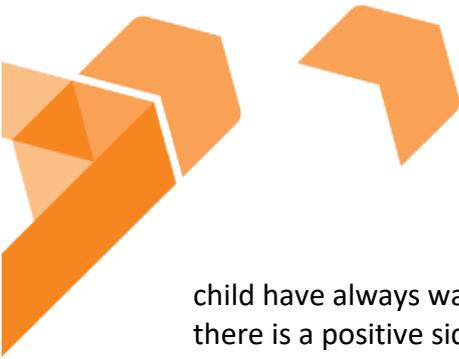
Even if you are not a fan of exercise, your child may be motivated to start and follow through with exercise if they observe you doing it and enjoying it! This could be something as simple as dancing to music in the living room or going for a walk or bike ride.

Be flexible

It is much harder to do something when you do not have the motivation to do so, particularly for children with ADHD. Be kind to yourself and your child and be flexible around morning and evening routines; it is okay to make exceptions and have a lie-in every now and then.

Play and laugh with your child

By giving your time and attention freely and positively, this should hopefully reduce your child's challenging behaviour. Make a list of games, interests or projects that you and your



child have always wanted to do or try out but never had the time to explore. Show them that there is a positive side to being at home with usual routines and activities cancelled!

How to support your child with home-schooling?

Communicate with the school

It is important for you to know what support your child has been getting in the classroom, and how you might maintain continuity at home. Ask teachers and/or school staff how much of a role you should have in keeping your child or teen organized, focused and on task. Frequent and consistent communication with school staff will go a long way in easing this transition for both students and parents.

Structure the day

All children will benefit from structure in this unsettling time, but those with ADHD require this even more. Children with ADHD often do not cope well with uncertainty, long delay of gratification, and not knowing when the activities they find more rewarding are going to occur. Having a structured schedule will help reduce these feelings of uncertainty.

Chunking

Research shows that children can only really focus and work effectively for 45 minutes at most. In Psychology this is known as 'chunking' and it encourages engaging children for a short period of time that is realistic for their attention span and then allowing them a break. You can also offer incentives (like bonus screen time) for the completion of work. If you are able to, try to work alongside your child to be available for any questions and help them stay on task.

Children with ADHD benefit from having clear set expectations given in advance about how long each chunk will last, what they are being asked to complete in that time period and being followed up to see if this has been completed in line with the expectations set.

Alternate activities

It may be beneficial for your child if their activities are alternated, following those that are less appealing with those that they enjoy more. For example: If they have been asked to complete 45 minutes of work from their teacher, this can be followed with spending some time playing in the garden.

Use positive attention — and make it big!

Positive attention is a powerful motivator to influence children's behavior. Children with ADHD require this feedback to be as big and bold as possible. Think about how long you are giving the positive attention for, how close you are when you give it, how specific you are and the tone of your voice.



There is a difference between: “Good job” and “GREAT JOB GETTING STARTED ON YOUR ASSIGNMENT SO QUICKLY!”

Use attention as a motivator and reward

As everybody has been asked stay at home, children are going to be frequently seeking their parents’ attention, which can be challenging particularly if parents are working remotely. Teaching your child to earn your attention can be an effective way to get them to focus on their work or activities that they can do independently. For example: “I am going to be doing work on the computer while you do your English homework. When you have finished this, we can both go for a walk together”.

How to support your child to transition back to school

Following the current lockdown, it is not yet known when the return to school will be for most children. Currently, the Government are suggesting that there might be another phased return. It is important to start preparing children with ADHD for the transition back to school in order to support their emotional wellbeing and adjust to the significant changes of re-integration into school. Alongside this guidance, there are plenty of resources online to support with this transition.

Reflect on lockdown

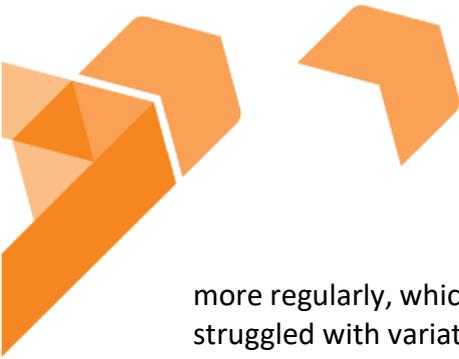
Create mind maps – What do you know now? What have you learnt about your child during the pandemic? Ask your child about their experiences in lockdown. They will likely have experienced a range of emotions and this will help your child to process these.

- Create a visual table of variables (virus, social distancing, school closed etc.) and support your child to communicate how they feel about each of them.
- You can use feeling scales of intensity (1=very happy, 5=very sad).
- Colour coding can also be helpful in expressing emotions (red=angry, blue=sad).

	Intensity	How I Feel
Virus		
Social Distancing		
School Closed		

Collaborate with schools

Share your experiences of home-learning with your child’s teachers. Being relieved of the demands of social interactions and expectations during lockdown may mean that your child has felt more comfortable at home. They also may have been able to access sensory breaks



more regularly, which has helped with their emotional regulation. However, others may have struggled with variations in routine.

Describe what the positives and challenges have been with home-learning during lockdown and how the needs of your child may be addressed best on return to school. For example:

- Use of a sensory space for time out
- Staggered start times
- Continued use of online/video learning
- Removing overwhelming information from walls
- Keep regularly updated on information from schools and the Government surrounding the phased return to school to aid the transition period.

Sensory processing

Children with ADHD may have had sensory provision or support in school before. In times of trauma, there may be a significant shift in their sensory responses and experiences. Being on heightened alert through lockdown may mean they are oversensitive to things like crowds, noises and smells. This may feel intense and overwhelming for children going back into school.

Some children may 'stim' more to help self-regulate in overwhelming situations (flapping, rocking, fiddling). This is to help the brain to focus on one sensory message at a time. It may be helpful to offer sensory strategies for your child to use in collaboration with school. For example:

- Fidget toys or stress balls can help your child regulate in the classroom environment.
Note: Schools needed to make changes, and they may temporarily not allow some sensory toys in school. Please check with the school to find out what is permitted and if you or the school will provide the alternative.
- Sensory breaks (quiet space, time outdoors)
- Use of ear defenders or headphones can help block out noise

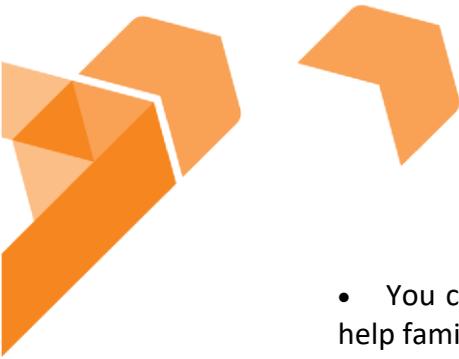
Communicate with your child

The uncertainty of the pandemic may have induced heightened anxiety in your child. Additionally, many children may display anxiety around returning to school following the long period of lockdown.

- Create social stories to explain what the current situations are and what is going to happen
- Write information down clearly and concisely. Allow processing time.
- Use visual aids (pictures, photographs)

Preparing for the transition

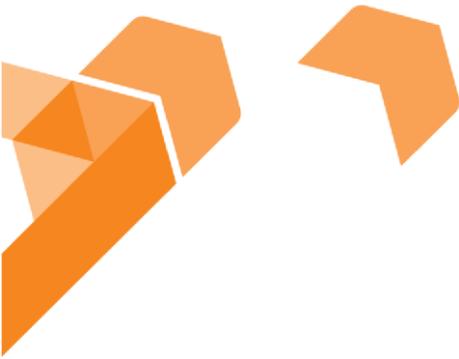
The familiar is what brings comfort in times of change. When introducing the concept of returning to school, remind your child of the things that will be the same (their workstation, teacher, classroom etc.).



- You could ask your child's teacher to take videos or photos of the school to help familiarise with the environment and routines.
- Whether or not you know the date of return to school, use a calendar to cross off the days spent at home so your child can recognise where they're at.
- Encourage your child to use visual timetables and schedules whilst at home to promote independence and self-checking. This will also aid with refamiliarizing routines.

Website links

- ADDitude - Coronavirus Crash Course for Parents: Keeping Kids with ADHD in 'Study Mode' While Home from School
<https://www.additudemag.com/webinar/coronavirus-homeschooling-parent-strategies/>
- ADHD Foundation- <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>
- Useful link about social story <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/>
- Visual Time table: free resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/class-management/daily-routine/visual-timetable>
- Supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities. Advice for parents and carers on supporting SEND children during coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/coronavirus-supporting-children-special-educational-needs-disabilities/>
- Surrey local offer SEND COVID-19 resources, information and FAQs
<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/advice.page?id=s8d0HI3q300>
- Surrey SEND Advice <https://sendadvicesurrey.org.uk/>
- The Challenging Behaviour Foundation Link for COVID- 19 resources from CBF:
<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information/covid19information.html#Infosheets>



Autism Community

We understand that many people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families are impacted by the constant uncertainty of what comes next and the many disruptions in services. In light of the current situation we felt it was important to collate a number of useful autism specific information that may help you at this time.

Talking to your children about what is happening

If you are caring for a young person with ASD it is important to talk to them about the coronavirus to ensure they have the information they need, but without causing unnecessary fear.

- It is important to talk to them before they hear about it elsewhere, so you can understand what they know and provide facts that are age appropriate.
- Try to communicate in a way that your child prefers, such as pictures or stories.
- Allow them time to process this information. They may need you share the information a few times.

Coping with uncertainty

Uncertainty can be difficult for everyone, but for some people the feeling of uncertainty can be particularly upsetting. Although difficulties coping with uncertainty are not specific to ASD, research suggests that people with ASD find uncertainty particularly difficult and anxiety provoking. When people find uncertainty upsetting, they might react in a number of ways. They may try and avoid uncertain situations completely; of course, this is not always possible.

- **Routines:** These are very important as they provide predictability which in turn lessens anxiety. Try to keep bedtime, bath time and mealtimes consistent.
- **Make a daily visual schedule:** With no school and many services not running as normal there are unavoidable schedule changes to the day. Try to make a daily schedule with some preferred activities on it. Schedule some family social time and play and reduce screen time.
- **Exercise:** Make some time to do some physical activity. This will help with lowering anxiety, improving sleep and supporting regulation. Encourage activities such as an outdoor walk, bike ride or even playing sports in the garden/park if the weather permits.
- **Video calls with family/friends:** It helps to stay connected. Doing this visually gives assurance that people are well and provides some outside interest.
- **Limit demands and changes:** With so many changes happening weekly, try to limit adding more new things. Allow time for adjustment to new scheduled changes. When adding new things do so one at a time, not several. If you notice anxiety, think about pulling back.



Anxiety management

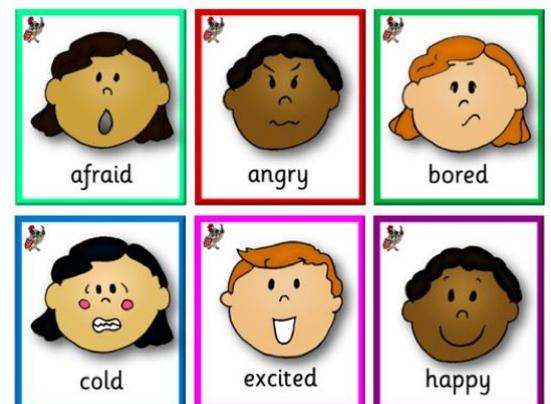
We understand the difficulties that will come with the transition as you are forced to adapt your daily routine, stay indoors and isolate from some of your support networks. It is normal for children and young people to feel worried and anxious at this moment. For those with ASD, the coronavirus pandemic may also worsen or trigger anxieties that they were already struggling with.

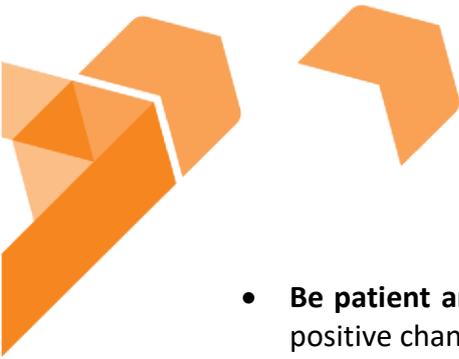
- Find out how they are feeling and what they are thinking about, reassure them that it is okay to feel scared or unsure, and try to answer their questions.
- Keep information clear and simple. General “chit chat” about the virus and its impact may not be helpful in helping those with ASD manage their anxieties.
- Establish familiarity where possible to help them safeguard their routines, if this is in line with the official government advice. Keep to their normal routine as much as possible, with changes made as appropriate.
- Encourage your child to keep a diary in which they write about situations which make them anxious and how these make them feel. Keep a close eye on the psychological and physical symptoms they present with. (see resources below)
- If there is an interest or activity which helps them relax then encourage the young person to do these, particularly when they are feeling anxious. Also try to engage in some relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or listening to relaxing music.

Emotion regulation and mood

Children and young people may have worries about the coronavirus that you cannot reassure them about. In these cases, it will be helpful for you to help them regulate their emotions. Emotional regulation will prepare them to handle future challenges.

- **Be aware:** Observe and listen to how your child expresses different feelings and emotions. Try to normalise talking about feelings and emotions to help children build a vocabulary on different feelings.
- **Name your child’s feeling out loud:** They will feel more secure when they feel that they are heard. Ask, rather than tell, but if they are not sure then you can offer suggestions for them to consider. **Visual aids:** Try to use visual aids to explain and express different types of emotions. Presenting information in a visual way can help to encourage and support communication for young people with ASD. Examples include mood charts, feelings ratings, social stories and emotional cards.
- **Behaviour management** Children and young people with ASD can have a difficult time managing their behaviour. In most cases children with ASD react to physical and emotional stress without any agenda; they may simply be expressing feelings of frustration, anxiety, excitement or sensory stimulation.





- **Be patient and realistic:** Tracking the behaviour will make it easier to notice small, positive changes. Behaviour generally does not change overnight so try to be realistic and set achievable goals. Try not to worry if things get worse before they get better.
- **Consistency:** When you start to see patterns of behaviour from the diary tracking then a behaviour plan can be put in place. It is important that all those involved stay consistent with their approach and regularly discuss progress.
- **Communication:** Consider limiting your communication to ensure they are not overloaded by information. Support them to communicate their needs using methods that work for them.
- **Consider their environment:** Many people with ASD may find it difficult to process everyday sensory information. It may be helpful to block out the sensory stimuli that causing them distress and utilise those that they may find pleasing (e.g. sensory toys).
- **Praise and Reward:** Using rewards when the desired behaviour is shown will help the young person to feel positive about their behaviour. This will also encourage them to repeat the behaviour.
- **Timeout:** Offer a safe space where they can feel calm. This can be a familiar place or perhaps doing a calm activity.

Meltdowns

A meltdown is ‘an intense response to overwhelming situations’. During a meltdown the young person may become so overwhelmed that they temporarily lose behavioural control. The loss of control can be expressed physically or verbally. Give them some time if they are not responding to you and try to create a quiet, safe space as best as you can.

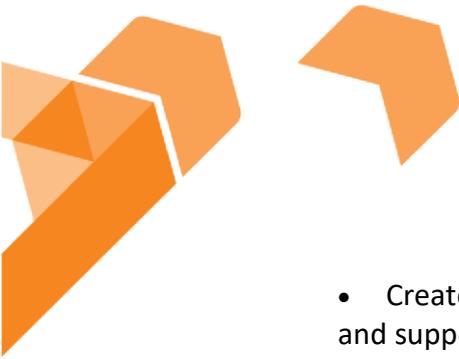
- **Anticipate a meltdown:** Some young people may show signs of distress before having a meltdown. Try to keep track of their triggers or any physical signs of distress.
- **Minimise the triggers:** Once you have some idea of what their triggers are, try to think of ways that you might minimise these triggers.
- Develop strategies to minimise their anxiety (see resources below).

Preparing for the Transition Back to School

Following the COVID-19 lockdown, it is not yet known when the return to school will be for most children. Currently, the Government are suggesting that there might be another phased return. It is important to start preparing children with ASD for the transition back to school in order to support their emotional wellbeing and adjust to the significant changes of re-integration into school. Alongside this guidance, there are plenty of resources online to support with this transition.

Reflect on lockdown

Create mind maps – What do you know now? What have you learnt about your child during the pandemic? Ask your child about their experiences in lockdown. They will likely have experienced a range of emotions and this will help your child to process these.



- Create a visual table of variables (virus, social distancing, school closed etc.) and support your child to communicate how they feel about each of them.
- You can use feeling scales of intensity (1=very happy, 5=very sad).
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Share your experiences of home-learning with your child’s teachers. Being relieved of the demands of social interactions and expectations during lockdown may mean that your child has felt more comfortable at home. They also may have been able to access sensory breaks more regularly, which has helped with their emotional regulation. However, others may have struggled with variations in routine.

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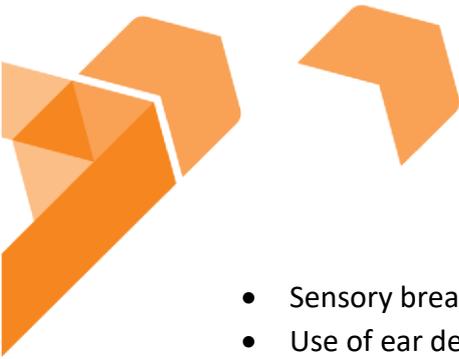
- Use of a sensory space for time out
- Staggered start times
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- Sensory breaks (quiet space, time outdoors)
- Use of ear defenders or headphones can help block out noise

Communicate with your child

The uncertainty of the pandemic may have induced heightened anxiety in your child. Additionally, many children may display anxiety around returning to school following the long period of lockdown.

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- Write information down clearly and concisely. Allow processing time.
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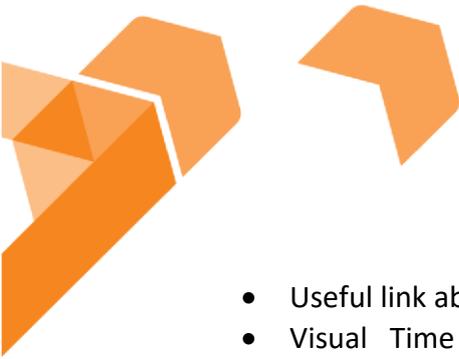
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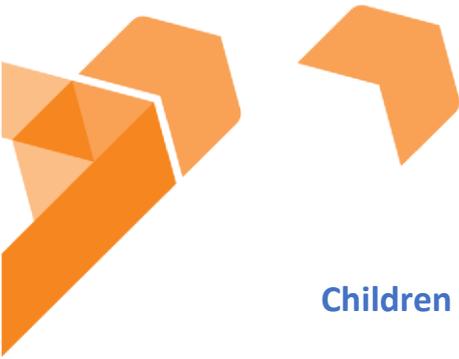
- You could ask your child's teacher to take videos or photos of the school to help familiarise with the environment and routines.
- Whether or not you know the date of return to school, use a calendar to cross off the days spent at home so your child can recognise where they're at.
- Encourage your child to use visual timetables and schedules whilst at home to promote independence and self-checking. This will also aid with refamiliarizing routines.

Website links

- <https://www.reachoutasc.com/blog/8-ways-to-help-autistic-pupils-manage-anxiety>
- <https://www.schudio.tv/courses/preparing-autistic-send-children-for-going-back-to-school>
- <https://www.annakennedyonline.com/autism-and-coronavirus-advice-for-parents-by-rosie-weldon/>
- <https://themighty.com/2020/03/covid-19-autism-routine-disruption/>
- <https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coping-with-uncertainty>
- National Autistic Society <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- Helping your child with anxiety: List written by Jacqui Rodgers:
<https://www.acamh.org/app/uploads/2020/03/When-anxiety-feels-overwhelming-2.pdf>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>



- Useful link about social story <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/>
- Visual Time table: free resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/class-management/daily-routine/visual-timetable>
- Supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities. Advice for parents and carers on supporting SEND children during coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/coronavirus-supporting-children-special-educational-needs-disabilities/>
- Surrey local offer SEND COVID-19 resources, information and FAQs <https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/advice.page?id=s8d0Hl3q300>
- Surrey SEND Advice <https://sendadvicesurrey.org.uk/>
- **Social stories:** autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips
- The Challenging Behaviour Foundation Link for COVID- 19 resources from CBF: <https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information/covid19information.html#Infosheets>



Children with parents or significant others in 'shielded' group

There are many reasons why someone may be isolating which can include being vulnerable, not being able to go to work/school or having Coronavirus. Regardless of the reason, it can be stressful being isolated from other people. Having to remain indoors with limited social interaction, does increase levels of stress and anxiety. Remember that physical distance between you and your family and friends, does not mean you are alone.

Things you may want to know!

As your child is spending more time at home, outside of their usual routines, you may notice certain regressions in your child's behaviour. Regressive behaviour is caused when events that a child experiences are unexpected and cause distress, like the current health crisis. You may also notice other behavioural changes in your child which can include:

- Regression to behaviours like bed-wetting, thumb sucking and baby talk
- Increased separation anxiety (e.g. not wanting to sleep alone)
- Tantrums
- Trouble sleeping
- Emotionality
- Increased anxiety
- Increased inattention
- Challenging behaviour
- Lack of motivation
- Changes in appetite

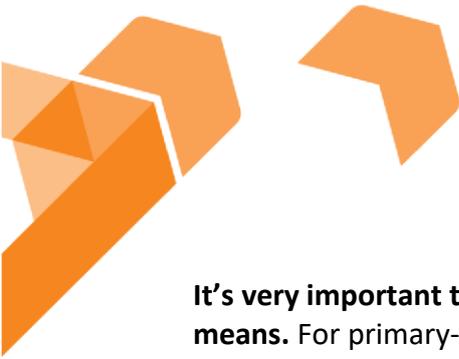
Children communicate through behaviour:

It might be difficult for children to understand what they feel. Some children may experience feelings like fear, sadness or anger without knowing why they feel that way as such feelings may be outside of their consciousness. Other children may not have the words to explain what they are experiencing and may struggle to name emotions. Or you may notice changes in their behaviour including meltdowns.

Top Tips

Be curious. Ask yourself, "Why is my child acting this way? What is my child communicating? Is my child scared?" (Young children have vivid imaginations that are inclined to make them fret about situations with which they have no previous experience.)

Talk with your child about what happened when you are both ready. Using emotion coaching can help your child to regulate. (For information about emotion coaching refer to leaflet "Should I talk to my child about COVID-19?")



It's very important that you talk with your children about the pandemic and what it means. For primary-aged children, you can download a book on coronavirus produced by children's illustrator Axel Scheffler in collaboration with public health specialists. For older children and teens, there is The Mix website. Remember your child may have additional concerns not related to the virus. Try to understand how your child is feeling and help your child express remembering that each child is different and have their own emotions and thoughts. Help them to voice their thoughts and feelings. You could consider allocating a special time in the day to talk to your child about their experiences; you don't need lots of time and 10 to 15 minutes would be enough. Not all children want to talk so don't get discouraged if your child doesn't initially as it is important not to pressure them; instead be consistent and let them know you are there for them when they are ready.

Structure the day. It might be difficult to keep a routine if you are isolating. However routines and structures are vital to mental health and well-being. Maybe consider using visual timetables to try and plan your days like mealtime and bedtime and try to keep them consistent.

Screen Time. It's possible that currently you and your children are having more screen time than usual and you may have temporarily relaxed rules. However, do remember it is important to strike a balance between relaxing screen time and boundaries. Also it is important to know what your kids are watching and doing online and to keep talking to them about it. (For tips on how to help keep your child safe, find the balance of routine and boundaries refer to our internet and online safety leaflet).

Connect as a family. Try to connect and bond as a family. Whilst there may be challenges—there may also be considerable opportunities to get to know your children better and for your children to get to know you better. Think about activities the whole family can engage; play, games that bring you joy, have a meal together, be creative; you can wash the car, build, do cooking/baking. Have pampered sessions nail painting, face packs, bubble baths. Watch movies you can pretend that you are going to the cinema; your child can sell tickets and popcorn. All the simple things you do can turn into a fun activity if you allow yourself to be playful. If you feel you have run out of ideas try swapping ideas with your friends and think about the games you played when you were younger. A suggestion is to explore 'theraplay' activities where there is a range of games and ideas that can enhance bonding:

<http://www.burdenbasket.co.uk/media/files/Theraplay%20activity%20list%5B1%5D.pdf>.

Time alone. Time alone is vital for mental health and wellbeing and it is important that alone time is not used as a punishment, but the time a child and young person takes to relax and have downtime. You can help younger children build their own space, i.e. you can build a 'den' or a quiet space with pillows/blankets/fairy lights/favourite toys where a



child can retreat to. This could be a popup tent or just some sheets over chairs. Equally, it is good for you to find a time and place for your own alone energising time.

Ensure your family has access to natural light. If you don't have a garden, you and your family may have limited exposure to natural light, which may result in a drop in the production of melatonin (sleep hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle), and serotonin (helps regulate mood), which are essential for mental health and well-being.

So plan daily daytime exercises, and sit in the garden or next to the window to access daylight.

Eat foods that help boost melatonin such as walnuts, cherries, milk, or bananas. Salmon, poultry, eggs, soy products, nuts, milk and spinach are among the foods that can help boost serotonin.

Avoid pressure. What sort of pressure are you under? Is there pressure to carry on with life as if nothing is happening? To be a perfect parent or employee? Making difficult decisions? Feeling like you have to look like you have it all together? All of these pressures can lead to anxiety. Try to be kinder to yourself and acknowledge that you are doing the best you can under the current circumstances. Children and young people may also feel pressurised so you can consider reducing demands and expectations. Maybe liaise with the school and agree on certain tasks to be completed (e.g. core subjects or a certain number of hours work a day).

Connect with friends and family. Being unable to visit your family and friends may feel heart-breaking, your children also may have a hard time not being able to see their friends and play with them. It can be especially hard if some of your children's friends are now returning to school. Maybe you can help your children connect with their friends on the telephone or online. You can organise 'informal class' through one of the online meeting platforms; if you or child likes cooking, exercising, dancing why not try to organise an 'informal class' and invite your friends and family. Or you can bring your child's class friends together; especially if they have just been through a transition year (e.g. they have just gone into year 1, 3, 7 or 12) it might be nice for them to connect with new friends from school. One way of connecting is to send homemade cards or letters as then you are helping your child to connect and also developing skills whilst being creative. Maybe you could connect with your school and encourage your child to get involved in a project taking video or photos and this could be emailed into school. It is important to remember that positive feedback builds enthusiasm and enhance motivation. Additionally, there may be a lack of cuddles from others during the pandemic isolation. When we cuddle our body release oxytocin (the hormone that helps to deal with stress) so be aware they, and you, may need more cuddles at home.

Reach out. It's a strength to reach out and ask for support, so speak to someone you trust—a friend, a family member or a helpline such as Samaritans or Mind. Children and young people may need to reach out too and they can access Childline or Young Minds. You may



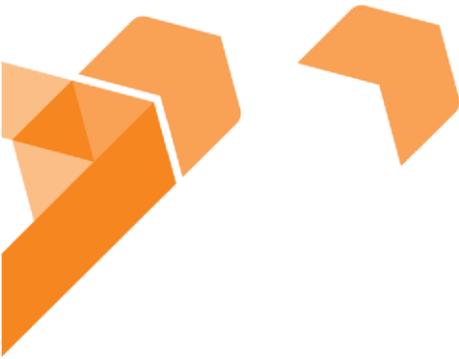
want to make a list of people you know and identify those who are good at providing practical, psychological and moral support. This is something that your child could do also.

Control what you can. Focus on controlling the things that are within your control. This means knowing you cannot control others or the future. 'Every day is a school day' so be compassionate to yourself as, if not, uncertainty may drive you to hopelessness and a heightened level of anxiety.

Patience. Remember you are trying the best you can!!!

Website links

- Action for Happiness is a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society. We want to see a fundamentally different way of life - where people care less about what they can get just for themselves and more about the happiness of others. <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/about-us>
- Lets get cooking at home <https://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/lets-get-cooking/cooking-at-home/cooking-with-children-of-different-ages.html>
- Diet behaviour and learning <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/diet-behaviour-and-learning-children.html>
- Healthy eating for children <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-eating-for-children.html>
- Government publication advice on shielding:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>



Bereavement

Sadly, more of us will experience bereavement due to the effects of COVID-19. Children grieve differently and it can be helpful as a part of the recovery process to know what/what not to say and how to act during this time. Some children may ask questions, while others may not say anything at all. Some may want to be with an adult; some may want time alone. Neither is wrong, but often children show their feelings through their behaviour.

Primary school age (6-12years)

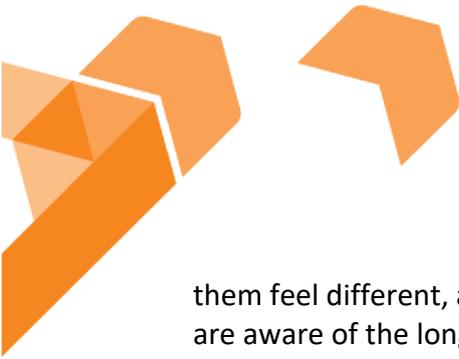
Children begin to develop the understanding that death is irreversible and something that happens eventually to all living things. Death may be regarded as something that is a bit 'spooky', and they may display what seems to be an unhealthy curiosity in the more morbid aspects of the death. Children at this age may complain of headaches, a sore tummy or other ailments. These are referred to as 'somatic' complaints and are generally physical manifestations of emotional pain. Behaviour may change, but it is important to encourage children at this age to express their feelings and understand that what they are feeling is perfectly natural.

Key points at this age:

- Understand that death is final but see it as something that happens only to other people.
- May think of death as a person or a spirit, like a ghost, an angel, or a skeleton.
- Understand that death is universal, unavoidable, and will happen to them (by age 10).
- Are often interested in the specific details of death and what happens to the body after death.
- May experience a range of emotions, including guilt, anger, shame, anxiety, sadness, and worry about their own death.
- Continue to have difficulty expressing their feelings and may react through behaviours such as school phobia, poor performance in school, aggression, physical symptoms, withdrawal from friends, and regression.
- Still worry about who will take care of them and will likely experience insecurity, clinginess, and fear of abandonment.
- May still worry that they are to blame for the death.

Teenagers and Young People

At this stage of development, young people are developing their own ideas about who they are and what is important to them in their lives. They are more aware of their future. Death may cause them to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, or they may not want to reflect and hide their feelings. As adults, our job is to let them know that we are there if they need to talk or that we can find someone else to help if necessary. Although the grieving process at this age is much like adults, teenagers are still developing emotionally, and need support. By now young people are much more aware of the finality of death, and the impact that the death has had on them. The death of someone important may make



them feel different, at the very time that they want to be the same as everyone else. They are aware of the longer-term impact of their loss, when future milestones will not be shared with the person who has died. Relationships with others are becoming increasingly important, and any loss can lead to feelings of anger or severe distress.

Key points at this age:

- Have an adult understanding of the concept of death, but do not have the experiences, coping skills, or behaviour of an adult.
- May 'act out' in anger or show impulsive or reckless behaviours, such as substance misuse or fighting in school.
- May experience a wide range of emotions, but not know how to handle them or feel comfortable expressing them.
- The reality of death contradicts a teenager's view of himself or herself as invincible, and teenagers may question their faith or their understanding of the world.
- Developmental issues of independence and separation from parents can interfere with the ability to receive support from adult family members.
- Coping strategies may create tension with family members, as adolescents may cope by spending more time with friends or by withdrawing from the family to be alone.

What can parents do to help?

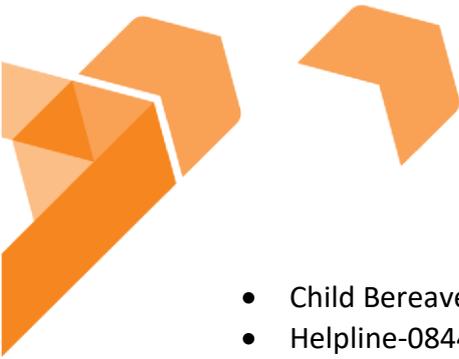
- Encourage child/young person to talk about their thoughts and feelings
- Make opportunities to remember their loved one, memory box, photos
- Develop rituals, creating a special place to go to each week
- Encourage the child/young person to resume activities they previously enjoyed
- Suggest writing feelings down
- Develop a self soothe kit
- Spend time outside
- Eat well and take regular rest
- Spend time with family/friends they care about
- Consider bereavement counselling if concerned
- Let school know of bereavement

Remember

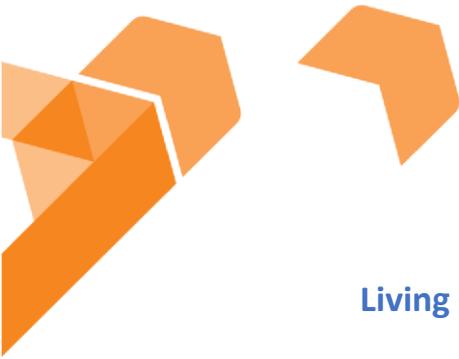
Grief is a very personal experience; every child and young person will experience it differently, give them space to deal with their feelings in their own way.

Website links

- CRUSE bereavement counselling services: www.cruse.org.uk
- Winston's Wish: winstonswish.org.uk
- Jigsaw: www.jigsawsoutheast.org.uk
- Relate: www.relate.org.uk



- Child Bereavement UK: www.childbereavement.org/training/training-schools/
- Helpline-0844 4779400
- Muslim Bereavement Support Services: www.mbss.org.uk / Helpline- 020 3468 7333
- Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities:
www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/help-information/learning-disability-a-z/b/bereavement



Living well in the changing world and Building Resilience

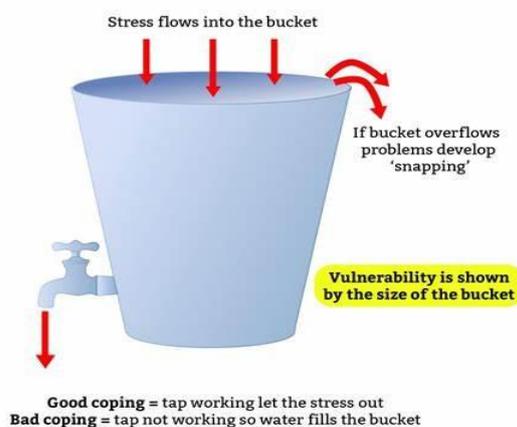
The Covid 19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work and interact with each other. We are all going through the same situation but will all have different experiences of it, based on our individual current environment, circumstances and all the aspects of our personalities that make us unique. Some people will have gone through very negative experiences (e.g. bereavement, not being able to go to work, financial worries due to job loss or reduced income, not being able to see people that we love). Some will have had positive experiences such as appreciating a slower pace of life, learning new things, more time to enjoy with immediate family, connecting with friends and family online, not having to cope with some of the modern stressors of daily life i.e. commuting, the fast and relentless pace of normal life that can sometimes leave us feeling stressed and exhausted. The majority of us will have had a combination of both. However, it will have undoubtedly have affected our mental health to some extent, including our children.

It is important that we address these issues and have strategies to manage our increased anxiety at this time, so that we can manage our mental health and stay safe, whilst learning to live well in the changing world. Increasing our self-resilience to the impact of situations and events that are out of our control (that are inevitable), whether they are positive or negative, short or long-lasting.

Psychological resilience

Psychological resilience is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly. When faced with a tragedy, natural disaster, health concern, relationship, work, or school problem, resilience is how well a person can adapt to the events in their life. A person with good resilience has the ability to bounce back more quickly and with less stress than someone whose resilience is less developed.

Everyone can learn to increase their resilience abilities regardless of their age, from any background, no matter your education or family relationships
Stress and Vulnerability Bucket (Brabban and Turkington, 2002)





The more resilience we have, the larger our bucket and ability to cope with and respond to unpredictable or stressful situations.

How Do You Increase Resilience?

There are many different ways you can increase resilience. Having supportive relationships in your life with your family and friends seems to be an important foundation according to much resilience research. Good, positive relationships help a person with reassurance and encouragement when times get tough and seem to help support a person's ability to rebound more quickly after a difficult event or problem in their life.

A person that has experienced more hardship and adversity may be more resilient than someone who has not faced the same challenges in life.

Having a healthy (positive) self-esteem also helps to increase our resilience.

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves or our capabilities. It's based on opinions and beliefs that we hold about ourselves. Your self-esteem can affect whether you like and value yourself as a person; are able to make decisions and assert yourself; recognise your strengths and positives.

Learning to accept and tolerate uncertainty can help to decrease anxiety and helps us to adapt and be more resilient to change. Being readily willing and able to accept and embrace change helps us to take on new challenges so that we can to achieve our goals and aspirations. This enables us to increase our confidence and self-esteem, which in turn promotes healthy growth and development.

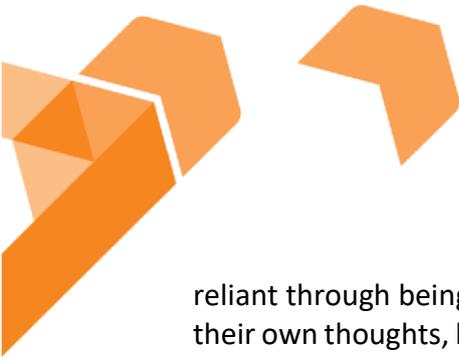
Change is certain

Covid-19 has brought a significant change to all of our lives and has presented lots of challenges and hardships that will take time to resolve. However, change can also be good and helps us to learn and make things better. Humans would not be alive today if we had not learned to adapt and evolve as a race, in response to our changing world and environment.

We now have COVID-19 vaccines and eventually social distancing may well be a distant memory, as society returns to its usual activities. But for now, we have to accept a new normal and learn to live with Covid-19 to ensure that we are all safe but also find ways to live well and ensure that we look after all aspects of our physical and mental health.

Helping children and young people to live well throughout this time is vital to ensure that they are able to accept the situation and acknowledge that whilst they cannot control it (or like it), that they can control certain things (such as their thoughts, beliefs about a situation, their school work and their behaviour).

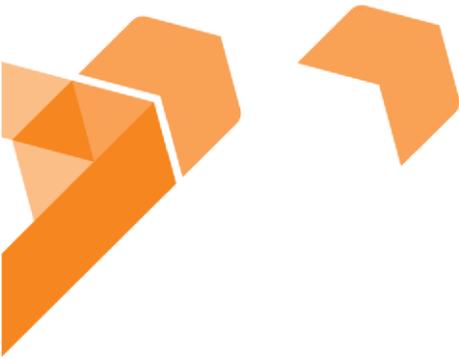
By letting go of the things that are out of our control but focusing on the things that we can do something about, we can help children to become more emotionally resilient and self-



reliant through being able to find positive coping strategies and ways of managing their own thoughts, behaviours and emotions. These skills can help everyone throughout life, ensuring that we can continue to feel safe, learn, achieve and ultimately feel content with ourselves regardless of what life throws at us.

Top Tips

- Connect with others. Spend quality time with family and friends (online or in person, safely observing social distancing). Connecting with nature and spending time outdoors can also help to improve our mood.
- Take notice – of ourselves (our thoughts, feelings and behaviours), others and our environment. Take a minute to slow down and appreciate what is happening around you. Practicing deep breathing, relaxation or mindfulness techniques can help to improve our mental wellbeing.
- Practice self-compassion and acceptance – acknowledging that whatever happens, you are a good person and doing the best you can. Avoid negative self-talk which can affect our self-esteem.
- Give – Showing kindness to others and reaching out to others helps us to feel good about ourselves and can increase our sense of value and accomplishment (making a difference).
- Be active. Taking part in regular activity or exercise that we enjoy is important to help keep us physically healthy and can help to improve our mood and mental wellbeing.
- Keep learning. Have a structure and daily routine. Set realistic goals and reward ourselves when these are achieved. For younger children, encourage imagination and creative play.
- Get good, quality sleep. This helps us to be better able to manage and be more resilient to stress.
- Healthy diet – Eating plenty of fruit, vegetables and drinking water (6-8 glasses daily). Limiting foods or drinks that are high in sugar or saturated fat, alcohol and caffeine. What we eat affects our body, brain and behaviour. Having a healthy, balanced diet increases our body's ability to cope with stress and being a healthy weight reduces the risk of poor physical health and developing chronic illnesses in later life.
- Limit exposure to activating/ distressing events on the news, social media and internet. We cannot control these and often they leave us feeling sad/anxious/scared. Our time is better spent doing things (and being around people) that we can do something about and that helps us to feel productive and good about ourselves.
- Be positive and future-focused. Remember that things will get better and that change can bring good things to our lives.



Bed time top tips for better sleep

Why do we sleep?

Sleep is traditionally defined by behavioural characteristics, as humans we usually close our eyes, whilst lying down in a darkened room. Sleep is a reversible state of reduced awareness of and selective responsiveness to the environment.

“If sleep does not serve an absolutely vital function, then it is the biggest mistake the evolutionary process ever made”. Rechtschaffen

- Cognitive, emotional and physical health developments happen whilst asleep. Our growth hormone is realised and new learning gets transferred in to long term memory from working memory, both particularly important for children.
- Sleep is a learnt behaviour and therefore is changeable. Bed time becomes associated with the routine and knowing what's going to happen next.
- About one in five people in the UK have some difficulty with sleeping and is particularly common when feeling stressed or anxious.

All children are different. Some settle very quickly into a sleep routine, while others may take some time. Fortunately, these problems can be helped by the types of ideas which will be described in this handout. There is a great deal of research which shows that this advice is helpful for all children including those with ADHD, Autism and learning disabilities even when the sleep problems are severe or have been going on for several years. These techniques work for toddlers, young children and teenagers alike.

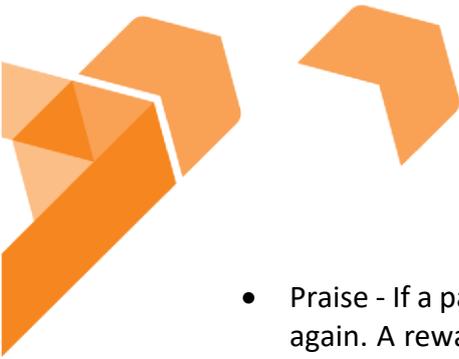
What is a problem?

A child's sleep pattern is only a problem if it is a problem for you or your child. You may not mind spending several hours comforting your child who cannot sleep but your child may be tired or overactive (both signs of lack of sleep) the next day. In this case, the sleep pattern is a problem for the child. Or, you may not mind that your child sleeps in your bed but you would mind if he was still sleeping in your bed in a few years' time. In this case, the sleep pattern may become a problem for you.

Feeling relaxed is important in the run up to bedtime for both you and your child. If your child is experiencing difficulties sleeping it can make you both feel anxious. Children quickly pick up on the stress levels of those around them so it is important to try to keep calm as bedtime approaches.

Top Tips

- Be consistent. Your child will learn most quickly if you behave in the same way every time (e.g. have the same bedtime routine every night, or, resettle him back to sleep in the same way every time he wakes).



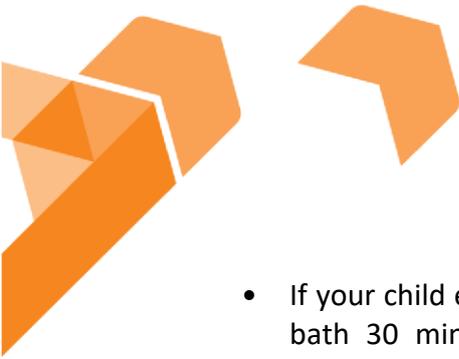
- Praise - If a particular behaviour is “rewarded” in some way it is more likely to happen again. A reward can be anything that a child finds pleasant, such as praise, a drink, a hug or attention. Even the attention of a tired and irritable parent can be more rewarding than nothing! When trying to encourage a piece of behaviour it is best to start by rewarding something simple that the child can do (e.g. getting into bed) so that they can learn to earn a reward. Try to watch out for times when he is doing something right that you can reward.
- Avoid physical activity in the run up to bedtime. Exercising too close to bedtime can actually wake your child up.
- If your child is a worrier set aside some time during the day to give them your full attention and to find out how their day has been.
- Avoid day time naps we can only sleep so much in a 24 hour period. Sleeping during the day, will delay the need to fall asleep at night.
- Keep a diary to see if there are patterns or particular triggers for problematic behaviours, delay in sleep, waking often etc.

Bed time routine

A good routine is important to help children to develop better sleep habits. You must be consistent when you implement a new routine, your child’s sleep patterns may appear to become worse before they get better as they may try to resist new changes that you make. Parents often give up when implementing a routine as they feel that it isn’t working, you need to give any changes at least 2 weeks to see results.

Here are our top tips for developing a good bedtime routine

- The bedtime routine should last about 20 minutes to half an hour. It should include a definite end-point, something that your child can learn to associate with falling asleep. This may be turning off the light or you saying goodnight to your child. Many parents find it helpful to have a “goodnight phrase”, (e.g. “Goodnight, sleep tight, see you in the morning”). This is a little phrase that they can say every night just as they leave their child to settle to sleep. This is the last thing you say to your child every night and the signal to them that it’s now time to settle down for sleep.
- Do the same thing at the same time each day, including waking your child at the same time each morning, this will strengthen their body clock. Yes, we know this is hard on a weekends, but it is also very important!
- Switch off any screens - phones, computers and TV’s, 1-2 hours before bedtime, these be very stimulating activities and hinder a good night’s sleep. Screen activity can also interfere with body’s production of the hormone melatonin!
- Fine motor skill activities help children to relax, encourage them to take part in these before bedtime. Colouring in, jigsaws, threading activities all help to promote relaxation. You may need to plan appropriate relaxing activities in advance.



- If your child enjoys having a bath then you should include this within your routine. A bath 30 minutes before bed is perfect for aiding sleep. The decrease in body temperature after getting out of a bath makes us feel sleepy around half an hour later.
- Give your child warnings that bedtime is approaching; you may use a visual timetable to show them what is going to happen next.
- Use calming music as part of your bedtime routine to help your child to begin to wind down.
- Say goodnight and leave your child to fall asleep by themselves if possible.
- Write down the routine so that everybody involved knows what the procedure is.
- A bedtime story is a lovely way end the day and feel connected.

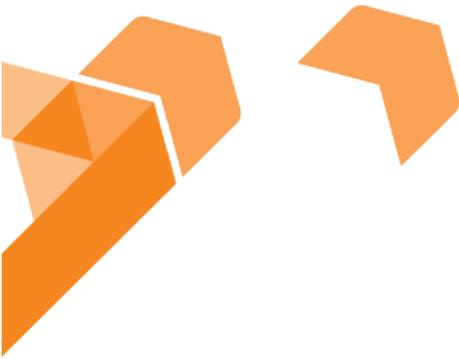
Sleep and diet

What your child consumes during the day may have an impact on their ability to sleep at night. Here are some interesting facts:

- Caffeine is a stimulant so best avoided in the run up to bedtime, ideally from lunch time. It is not only present in tea and coffee but can also be found in hot chocolate and fizzy drinks. Many ready-made drinks have caffeine – so check the content before you offer it to your child. Remember that people drink coffee to keep us awake!
- Fruit and natural fruit juice contains sugar which can give children a rush of energy if consumed too close to bedtime.
- Tryptophan is an essential amino acid that helps us to sleep and is naturally present in dairy products, turkey and oats. So it is true . . . warm milk can help you to sleep!
- A light snack as part of the bedtime routine can be helpful. Eating a heavy meal before bed can make it difficult to get comfortable. A well planned supper time can be beneficial, particularly for younger children who may be having their last meal early.
- Melatonin is the natural hormone that we produce when it gets dark and helps us to feel sleepy at night time. Some foods contain melatonin including bananas. The research around the amounts and its impact on sleep are still rather vague but bananas also contain magnesium which does help to relax muscles.
- Cereal can be a healthy supper time choice but check those sugar content levels.

Relaxation

- There are many relaxation CDs/apps that may help your child to feel calmer during the evening. These may be talking, calming music or white noise.
- You can also talk them through an imaginary scene such as a favourite trip to the beach, asking them to visualise the scene and to feel the warm sun on their face.
- Teach your child to progressively relax the muscles in their body. They can begin by tensing their feet to the count of 5 and then letting them become relaxed. Work up to the calf muscles, thighs and so on until they have relaxed each part of their body.
- Encourage your child to concentrate on their breathing. This can be just noticing it, counting or using imagery – breathing a beautiful white light and blowing out any worries or troubles each time they exhale.



Online/Internet safety

When schools are closed and we are advised to stay home during the COVID-19 pandemic, children and young people are going online more than usual in order to complete school work, keep in touch with friends and to play games. Some children may have new devices, or access to devices more freely than before via a phone, tablet or computer. It's important that your child is guided on how to use these safely, and in support of their emotional wellbeing. As parents/carers, you work incredibly hard at putting boundaries in place when it comes to using the internet, but the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the 'normal' routines that your child used to have, including their screen time and being online. It is important to strike a balance between relaxing screen time and boundaries.

Here a few tips to help you keep your child safe, find the balance of routine and boundaries and use the internet appropriately.

Mental health and wellbeing

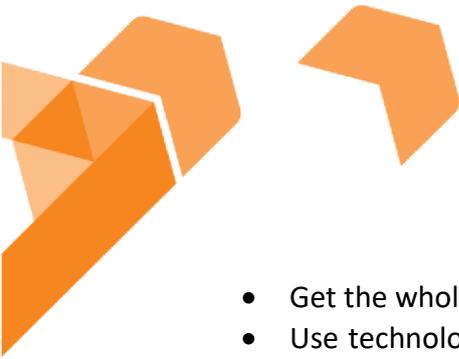
Social media and online gaming can have great benefits for your mental health. They can help you keep in touch and strengthen relationships with friends and family and share ideas and interests with others. However, it's important to keep a balance. Spending too much time online, comparing yourself to others, and cyberbullying can all have negative impacts on your mental health.

Ways the internet can support your child's mental wellbeing during the pandemic:

- Video calls to keep in touch and strengthen relationships with friends and family
- Group chats and messaging apps to socialise with friends and family
 - Sharing photos/videos of funny moments or achievements from their day/week
 - Helping each other with school work
- Using mindful or relaxation apps to learn to self-regulate
- Watching and following exercise videos on YouTube
- Support their learning: from accessing school work, googling the answer to their question, to watching YouTube videos to learn a new skill
- Playing online games with friends from school, sharing common interests, strengthening relationships and socialising!

Managing Screen time

- Set a good example with your own device use: Children tend to model their behaviours on parent/carer behaviour
- Talk together about the time they spend online: Take time to understand what they're doing on their devices and explain any concerns you have
- Agree an appropriate length of time that they can use their device: Put in place a family agreement to set some boundaries and don't break them



- Get the whole family to unplug and create 'screen free zones' at home
- Use technology and apps to help manage screen time: e.g. The app 'Forest' enables children to grow a forest when they don't use their phone for a set amount of time; set up Guided Access on an iPhone/iPad to limit the amount of time you can access a given app. Instructions can be found here: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT202612>

Keeping your child safe online

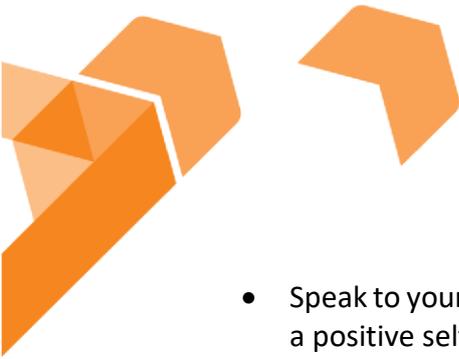
Keeping your child safe is a number one priority, so it shouldn't be any different online! By keeping your child safe online, you are protecting them from cyberbullying and exploitation.

- **Be Engaged:** Talk to your child about what they like to do online, who they are talking to and what they know about staying safe. Have these conversations little and often!
- **Be kind online:** Remind them that they still need to have manners and be kind when speaking to friends online.
- **Know how to report:** let your child know they can speak to you and inform them of where they can go if they see something unkind online, if they have been asked to do things they are uncomfortable with, or if they want to talk to you about cyberbullying.
- **Parental controls:** Think about setting parental controls on your child's device, or with your internet provider. This will prevent access to unsuitable websites.
- **Teach them simple rules:** including don't share personal information such as phone numbers, address or what school they go to, only talk to real life friends or family, not to download things without asking, or only use secure websites to download music and games. Help them understand different online platforms and what to look out for.

Social Media

Remember most social media platforms have a minimum age rating on 13. Social media can offer children opportunities to be creative, and socialise with friends, but it's important to stay safe too!

- **Sharing pictures and videos:** speak to your child about what selfies and pictures are appropriate to share with friends online, and not to share photos that they have of others without consent.
- **Posting personal information:** Help them put privacy settings in place to remove personal information, and location sharing on apps. Teach them what is ok to share online.
- **Chatting to strangers:** Help them understand that people can make fake profile and to be careful who they chat to. Have open conversations with your child, and ask them to share who they message with you.
- **Fake posts/news:** help your child understand that not all posts on social media sites are 100% true. Be aware of fake news, especially at times like this where posts online can speculate changes in the world.



- Speak to your child about not comparing themselves to others and help them maintain a positive self-esteem.

Online gaming

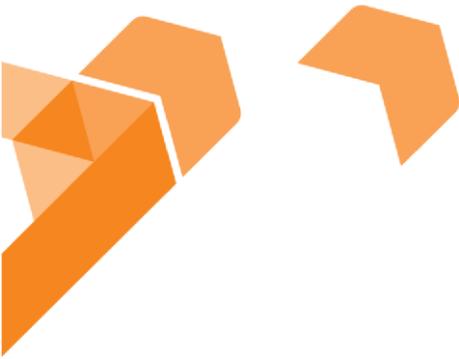
Online games can offer children opportunities to be creative, socialise with friends, and can help with development of problem solving and long-term memory. However, it's important that they play appropriate games, and know how to stay safe online!

- Content: Be aware of the game's themes and content that your child is playing. Check the PEGI ratings.
- Shared spaces: Encourage them to play in shared spaces. This way you can stay in engaged with what they are playing, and step in if you feel something is not right.
- Play as a family: Have a gaming night as a family, show you're interested in their world, but also clue yourself up on the gaming content and lingo so that you can spot cyberbullying, and other things that aren't right.
- Only play with people they know: This is a great way for children to keep in touch with friends from school whilst they are closed. Have conversations with your child about who they are playing with and remind them to only play online with friends they know.
- Set boundaries: have agreements on what they can play, when they can play, and for how long. Giving time warnings when it's time to come off will help them prepare for this ending, and finish their game... as humans we don't enjoy being interrupted when doing something we enjoy, it's the same for your child!

Cyberbullying

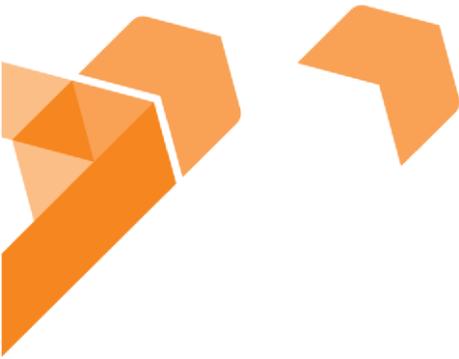
With most of your child's social interactions currently being done online, it's important to be aware of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is any bullying via social media, online gaming or instant messaging app's. Here are some tips on how to deal with cyberbullying.

- Talk about it: Encourage your child to talk to you or another trusted adult about what people are saying about them or someone else online.
- Stay calm: Have open, calm conversations about what happened before the message or post and try not to jump to conclusions. Stay calm if you find out your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
- Set an example: don't encourage your child to reply in a way that is angry, offensive or threatening.
- Be aware of how it can make your child feel: any form of bullying can make you feel sad, afraid, alone. Reassure your child that together you will get through this
- Report it: Help your child report any offensive or bullying content to the social media provider, raise bullying concerns with your child's school. Keep reporting it until it stops!



Website links

- InternetMatters.org offer information, advice and support to parents to keep children safe online: <https://www.internetmatters.org/>
- National Bullying Helpline offers Practical help and advice for children and adults dealing with bullying at school or work <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>
- Netaware provides parents with advice regarding keeping children and young people safe online. It includes guides to the social networks, apps and games they might use and what they are used for: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>
- The BBC Own It app is free and designed to support, help and advice children, in the moment, when they use their phones to chat and explore the online world: <https://www.bbc.com/ownit>
- The NSPCC Online Safety page offers information and advice to help keep children safe online: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety>
- Thinkuknow is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline. It contains websites for children and young people of different ages, which give advice about staying safe when you're on a phone, tablet or computer: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- Young Minds are a leading charity in supporting mental health of children and young people. They have guidance on their website for young people and parents on bullying. They also have a parent's helpline for advice. <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/bullying/>



Looking after yourself – tips for parents

Focus on connection and enjoyment

Put time aside for yourself

Scheduling some time to yourself when you need it can help you feel more balanced. This could be to focus on practical tasks such as your own planning / paperwork /online shopping, or it could also be for relaxation. Why not put time aside to listen to a podcast that will make you laugh, try meditation, take a long bath, or treat yourself to a takeaway instead of cooking?

- <https://www.headspace.com/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts>

Hobbies. Sometimes our hobbies may take a backseat in our busy lives. Have a think about connecting with things you have enjoyed or might like to try. Some examples include gardening or growing indoor plants, learning a new language, woodworking, crafts, cooking, online blogging/vlogging or learning to code. See the Hobby Help website for additional inspiration: <https://hobbyhelp.com/inspiration/indoor-hobbies/> You may also want to explore new hobbies with the family or your partner.

Ideas: <https://theimaginationtree.com/stay-at-home-survival-guide/>

Relationships. The people close to us can have a big impact on how we feel and what we do. Try to stay in touch with friends and family members, even if this can only be via a video/phone call. You may want to schedule a time to do this if you are pressed for time. If you are feeling particularly isolated or lonely, you could consider joining a support group or an activity based group. This could be anything from ad-hoc online volunteering, book clubs or online gaming. You may benefit from group support relating to a particular issue or choose to set-up your own.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/how-to-set-up-your-own-parents-support-group/> www.Meetup.com

Try to stay organised. It's a good idea to stay organised, particularly in times of stress or uncertainty where we may feel that we lack control. This could be as simple as writing a to-do list each day, allocating some time to work on a project, get your children/partner to help with household chores, develop a routine or a family calendar. <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/Parents/Be-an-organised-parent>

Make healthy choices

Ensure you have access to natural light If your exposure to natural light is limited, it may result in a drop in the production of melatonin and serotonin, which are essential for our mental health and well-being. Plan daily exercise during the daytime, and sit in the garden or



next to the window to access daylight. Eat foods that help boost melatonin such as walnuts, cherries, milk or bananas. Salmon, poultry, eggs, soy products, nuts, milk and spinach are among the foods that can help boost serotonin.

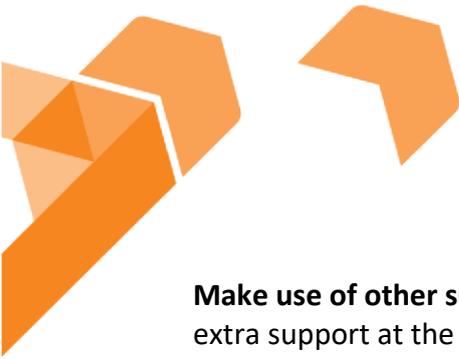
Look after your well-being by having a regular sleep pattern and getting enough sleep. It's easy to develop unhealthy coping strategies. So, reduce your consumption of drinks that contain caffeine or alcohol. Make an effort to exercise; when you exercise, your body releases endorphins, dopamine and serotonin—hormones that are essential for your health. Also, make healthier food choices to strengthen your immune system and improve your well-being.

Don't pressure yourself. The pressure to know the answers, to carry on with life as if had no impact on you; the pressure of smiling even though you may not feel like it; the pressure of having different values, making difficult decisions and feeling criticised; and the pressure to look as though you have it all together can all cause anxiety. Try to be kinder to yourself and acknowledge that you are doing your best under the circumstances you are in.

Reflect: Don't ignore your thoughts and feelings. Some of us may have a habit of escaping the uncomfortable feelings that the current crises evoke in us, but those feelings need to be processed. So, take some time to quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts; recognise that you have emotions, name them and control them enough to enable yourself to choose how you respond. You may write down your worries and anxieties; or keep a journal. It is important that you don't ignore your anxieties, but also don't allow your worries to take over you, so you don't feel swept along by your thoughts and feeling of anxiety.

- You can set aside a specific worry time of 10–15 minutes each day. Spend this time thinking about your worries: you can write them down, draw, or make notes in a journal. It doesn't matter how you express your fears as long as you acknowledge that you are feeling this way, and then remember to put your worries away. You may also try some calming breathing.
- Or you might try to approach your feelings as if you were a curious scientist — for example, notice “I am having thoughts about catching COVID-19!”. After noticing and bringing this to your awareness, do some exercises that allow you to move out of your head and back into your body (do some breathing, pushing your feet into the ground, walk around, clap and rub your hands together), and remain engaged in the physicality of those exercises.

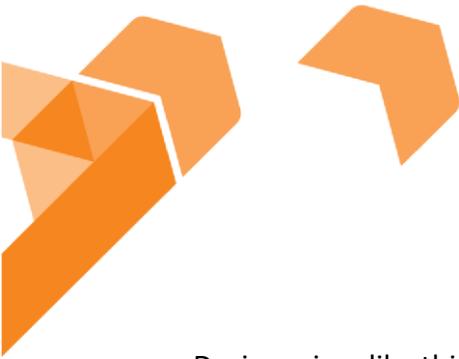
Reach out for support. Remember you are not alone; talk to someone and ask for help. It's strength to reach out and ask for support, so speak to someone you trust—a friend, a family member or a helpline. You may want to make a list of people you know and identify those who are good at providing practical, psychological and moral support.



Make use of other support if needed. Speak to your GP. It may be that you need a little extra support at the moment. Your GP is a good place to start as they can also direct you to other resources or services if necessary. For information about other services refer to resources section.

Website links

- **Healthy Surrey:** <https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/mental-wellbeing/adults/virtual>
- **Surrey County Council Community Helpline:** (for practical support, finding a telephone friend, or offering help to your community) **Tel:** 0300 200 1008 - Monday to Friday: 8am to 6pm, Saturday and Sunday: 10am to 2pm. **SMS:** 0786 0053 465 for Deaf and hearing impaired residents only (Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm)
- **Mind** – support and information about various mental health issues
<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/about-anxiety/#.VfqDf7RqfTQ>
- **The Recovery college** provide free meant health course courses
<https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services/recovery/recovery-college/latest-news-recovery-college>
- **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)** – for men **Call 0800 58 58 58** – 5pm to midnight every day **Visit** the webchat <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/>
- **Catalyst Drug and alcohol service** <https://www.catalystsupport.org.uk/>
- **Cruse Bereavement care Helpline:** **0808 808 1677** **Website:** <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- **Mind Matters Surrey IAPT** (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) is a talking therapy service for adults (18+) registered with a GP in Surrey. They provide quick and easy access to talking therapies, <https://www.mindmattersnhs.co.uk/>
- **Samaritan helpline** - Whatever you're going through, samaritans will face it with you. Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 for free <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- **Surrey domestic abuse helpline** 01483 776822 9am to 9pm, 7 days a week
- **Papyrus Hopeline UK**- free confidential helpline or online support for anyone having suicidal thoughts, or for anyone concern about young person at risk of harming themselves. Helpline:08000684141 (Monday-Friday 10.am-10pm.; Saturday-Sunday 2pm-5pm www.papyrus-uk.org/support/for-you
- **The Mental Health Crisis Helpline** is a telephone service offering support to adults of all ages in Surrey and North-East Hampshire who are experiencing a mental health crisis. Lines are open 24 hours, seven days a week. You don't need to book an appointment and calls are free of charge. 0800 915 4644



What we need to know about pandemic

During crises like this pandemic children and adolescents are especially vulnerable groups. The reaction of these age groups to a disaster like this pandemic depends on their own psychosocial developmental stage; their individual characteristics; their degree of emotional and affective dependency on adults and their previous experiences. Children and young people often respond differently than adults to difficult events like pandemic. This is because their brains do not process information and events like adult brains. Moreover children and young people don't have the life experience and rationality to fully comprehend some events. For instance, most young children do not understand that death is permanent.

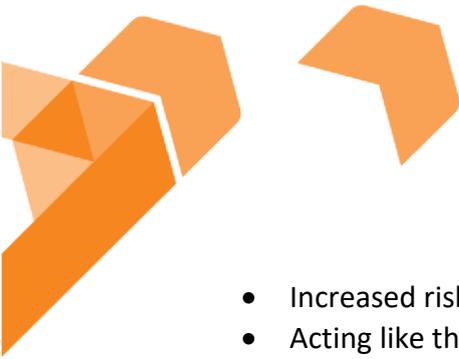
Children and young people are sensitive to how a disaster affects families and communities. Children are affected by an adults' response to an event. An overwhelmed adult frequently leads to a distressed child/young person.

It is vital to remember that children and adolescents' reactions to the current pandemic will vary widely, depending on circumstances such as:

- The extent of exposure.
- The amount of support during, and after, the pandemic.
- The amount of personal loss and social disruption.

In the aftermath of this pandemic, an emotional response is expected and can be considered a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Some of the behavioural changes can include:

- Regression to behaviours like bed-wetting, thumb sucking and baby talk
- Increased separation anxiety (e.g. not wanting to sleep alone or go to school)
- Tantrums, challenging behaviour /disruptive behaviour
- Changes in sleep and appetite
- Acting immature or younger than their age
- Avoid talking about unpleasant things
- Clinging and dependent behaviours
- Emotionality, fear, increased anxiety, depressed mood
- Increased inattention
- Lack of motivation
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of enjoyment (anhedonia)
- Social withdrawal
- Avoidance
- Hypervigilance
- Hypovigilance



- Increased risk-taking activities
- Acting like there is nothing good in the future

How can we help:

Creating routines. Creating a sense of predictability is an important way to support children's development during a new or challenging situation, as well as helping them to feel less anxious by allowing them to experience some certainty and therefore feel more grounded and secure. Routines or schedules are an excellent way to create a sense of predictability for both parent and child. Many parents may feel overwhelmed with the demands of homeschooling and working. Be prepared for the inevitability that some children may produce less work than they usually would at school.

Help Children with Feelings and Behaviors. When children go through a difficult time like a current pandemic, they need extra attention and support from their parents. It's critical to be patient with upset children who may have outbursts. It's also important to maintain the family rules about behaviour the same, if possible. When children don't have clear boundaries and limits for their behaviour, they may feel unsafe and more anxious.

The basis for helping children is **to spend time with them**, give them attention and offer them praise when they are doing things you want them to do and ignore the behaviours you would like them to stop doing (if it is safe to ignore), and talk with them in the way that enables them to share with you what they are thinking and feeling.

Adapt messages for and with a full range of children, including infants, young children and adolescents and provide children with appropriate information. Age-appropriate honesty explanations about what's happening and what to expect are an important part of helping children and young people feel safe and process traumatic experiences.

Connection. Help children and young people to keep in touch with family, pupils, friends and school staff. If children cannot interact with peers or friends they may feel isolated or lonely and have limited opportunities to practice social skills. Adolescents are starting to find their place in their peer groups. Crises like COVID-19 can disrupt social networks.

Practicing coping skills is important, even for young children. Teaching children to practice taking deep breaths and to think positive thoughts can go a long way in helping children feel calm.

Productivity. Children aged 7 and above have growing capacity of how they can contribute to their home or community. Finding ways to help others during a crisis can provide older children and young people with a sense of purpose and provide sense of achievement.



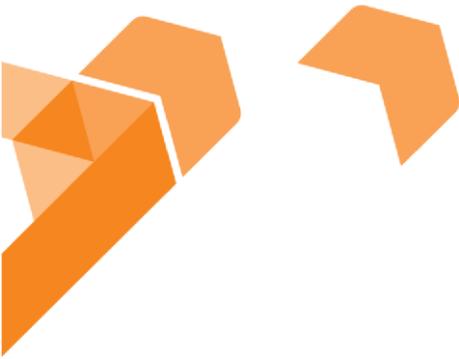
Encourage Play. Play is fundamental to how children develop problem solving skills. Moreover, in times of uncertainty, playing is one of the most important things for coping with stress and anxiety.

Sleep, nutrition, exercise. Those three things are vital for wellbeing. A study conducted during the beginning of the pandemic suggests that children who exercise and went to bed earlier and had longer sleep durations had fewer psychosocial problems, therefore **direct children** towards healthy behaviours. Encourage children to eat nourishing foods and get enough sleep at night.

Look after your own mental health and well-being! Contained adults are in a better position to support children; therefore, look after your mental health and well-being.

Resources

- This toolbox provides tips on how to navigate some of the emotional responses that families may experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/BHG-COVID19-FamilyToolbox.pdf>
- What we mean by learning through play:
https://www.legofoundation.com/media/1062/learningthroughplay_leaflet_june2017.pdf
- Play to cope with change: <https://www.legofoundation.com/en/learn-how/blog/play-to-cope-with-change/>
- There are also FREE online parenting guides for families to self-access. They cover the following topics; Understanding your pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby, Understanding your baby, Understanding your child 0 to 19 years, Understanding your teenagers brain. They can be found at: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families/support-and-advice/parenting-courses-andadvice/online-guides>



Resources

Helplines and websites for your child or young person

- ChildLine provides a helpline for any child with a problem. It comforts, advises and protects. You can: call 0800 1111 any time for free; have an online chat with a counsellor; check out the message boards
- Kooth online counselling 11-18 <https://www.kooth.com/>
- MindShift™ is an app designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety. It can help you change how you think about anxiety.
- Shout provides free, confidential support, 24/7 via text for anyone at crisis anytime, anywhere, You can: text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained Crisis Volunteer
text with someone who is trained and will provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving
- The Mix provides a free confidential helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem. You can:
call 0808 808 4994 for free – lines are open from 11am to 11pm every day
- ThinkNinja is an app designed to support 10-18-year olds with anxiety and low mood. They have updated the app to include COVID-19 Specific content
- Young Minds: provides advice about mental health and behaviour problems in children and young people up to the age of 25.
 - Parents' and Carers' Helpline on 0808 802 5544. <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- Children and Family Health advice line on 01883340992

Crises

CYP Haven

- CYP Havens, due to current given by HM Government and Public Health England to reduce social contact, the decision has been made to physically close the CYP Havens temporarily. However, a virtual service over the phone is available. Please refer to the CYPS Website for contact details as this is subject to change:
<https://www.cyphaven.net>

In the event of a medical emergency:

- In the event of a mental health or medical **emergency or if there are serious safety concerns**, please call 999 or visit A&E Department – You may be diverted to an A&E diversion service dependant on the nature of the medical emergency.

Immediate advice and support:

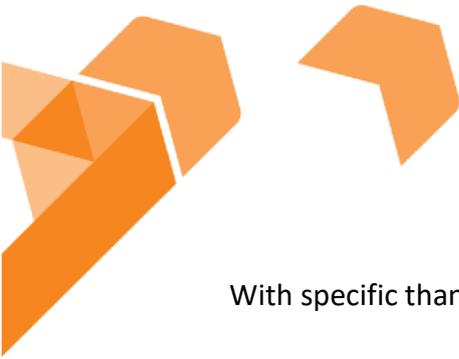
- Please refer to the NHS website regarding Emergency mental health care or contact one of the following:



- Mental Health Crisis helpline: (Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust): 0300 456 8342. SMS text line for deaf and hard of hearing: 07717 989 8342.
- SMS text relay: 18001 0300 456 8342. Service operates 5.00pm - 9.00am Monday to Friday, with 24 hours cover at weekends including Bank Holidays. If the lines are engaged your call will be diverted to an answerphone which will enable you to leave your contact details and someone will call you back within 30 minutes.
- NHS Tel: 111: please contact for emergencies or to discuss COVID-19 concerns that are less urgent than 999.
- Samaritans: provides 24 hour emotional support - Tel: 116 123 (UK) (free number)
- Sane Emotional Support: provides crisis support. Helpline 0845 767 8000 (6pm to 11pm seven days a week) – for young people age 16 and over
- Papyrus: Offers advice and support for young people, parents and friends. Monday-Friday 10am-5pm and 7pm-10pm. Saturdays 2pm-5pm. Website: www.papyrus-uk.org
- HOPELineUK: Tel: 0800 068 41 41 **Text:** 07786209697
- SHOUT: Crisis text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. Text Shout to 85258

Support for adults

- Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) – for men Call 0800 58 58 58 – 5pm to midnight every day Visit the webchat <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/>
- Catalyst Drug and alcohol service <https://www.catalystsupport.org.uk/>
- Cruse Bereavement Helpline: 0808 808 1677 Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- Mind helpline provides information and signposting service. Open 9 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays). Infoline: 0300 123 3393 Email: info@mind.org.uk Text: 86463 Phone calls from UK landlines are charged at local rates.
- Mind Matters Surrey IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) is a talking therapy service for adults (18+) registered with a GP in Surrey. They provide quick and easy access to talking therapies, <https://www.mindmattersnhs.co.uk/>
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