

Haringey Educational Psychology Service



SUPPORTING FAMILIES DURING CORONAVIRUS – COVID19

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WELCOME!

This booklet aims to give you information on how to support yourself and your children during this unprecedented time surrounding coronavirus and COVID-19.

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak which can cause a lot of worry and anxiety for people. Having children and young people at home, often when people are trying to work themselves, adds another layer of stress. It is normal to feel worried, stressed and anxious when we are faced with uncertain situations, but the sooner we acknowledge and learn to take care of our mental health, the healthier and better equipped we will be to cope with the situation we are having to face.

We want to share some information which may be supportive to your children and you as a family during this time. This includes the following:

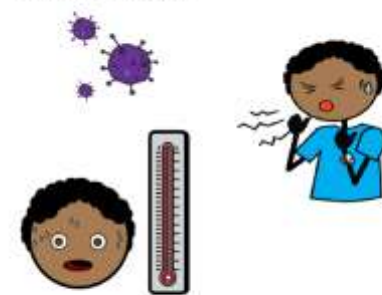
- How to explain to children and young people what the coronavirus is
- Resources around managing and supporting anxieties and well being
- Maintaining your **family's emotional well-being**
- Resources to use when staying at home with your children

1: HOW CAN I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT CORONAVIRUS?

It is really important that you explain what is happening in an age appropriate way, to help them understand about COVID-19. They will be affected by the huge changes that are going on around them, regardless of their age or any additional needs. Talk with them about their feelings and explain that it is normal to feel scared, sad or angry about the current situation.

Here are some useful resources which you can use.

The Coronavirus is a virus that can make people feel unwell.



The Coronavirus can also be called "COVID-19".

Resources for talking to children about Coronavirus

- <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/talking-children-about-coronavirus>
- <https://www.thedadsnet.com/this-free-book-is-great-for-explaining-covid-19-coronavirus-to-your-children>
- <https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>
(This is an informative animation for older children and young people)
- 'My name is coronavirus' social story – www.mindheart.co/descargables
- 'What is coronavirus social story' - <https://www.ppmid.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>

2: HOW CAN I EXPLAIN TO MY CHILD IF THEY HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS?

Use visuals/pictures and simple language to help to explain about what coronavirus is and why the school is closed.

For example:

People who have the Coronavirus may have:

- Sore Throat/ Dry Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath

I will not be able to go to my favourite places for now.

Once the Coronavirus is gone I will be able to go to my favourite places again.

(www.theautismeducator.ie)

School is closed

School is closed because of the Coronavirus.

Coronavirus can pass from one person to another.

Coronavirus can pass more in big groups.

It is best to NOT be in a big group.

We have big groups at school.

So school is closed.

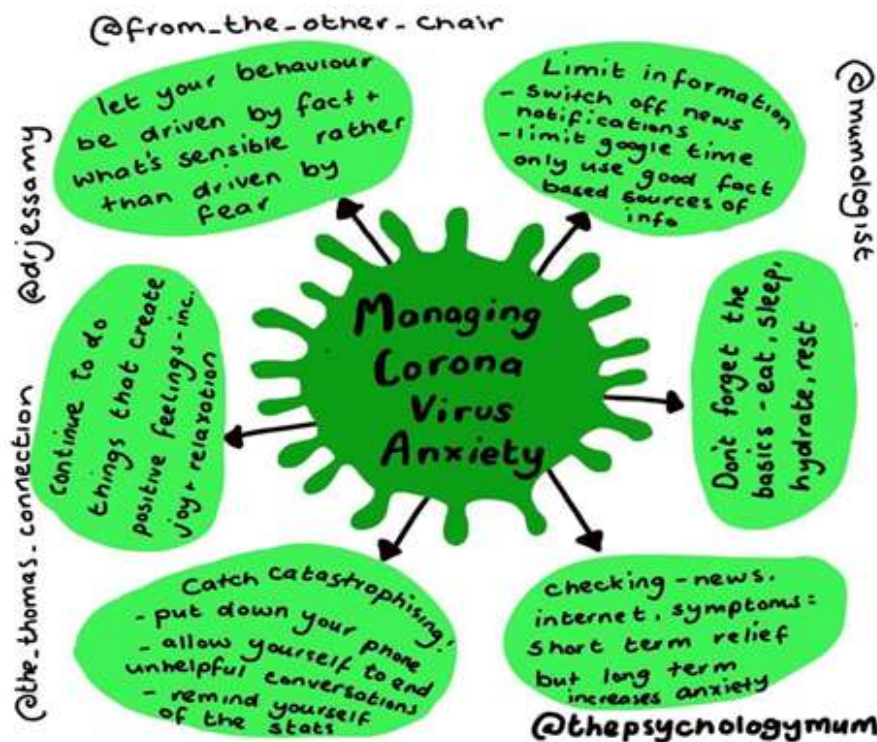
I will stay home for many days.

My family and my teachers want me to be safe.

When it is safe, I can be in big groups again.

When it is safe, school will be open again.

3: HOW CAN I HELP TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S WELL-BEING AND HELP MANAGE ANY ANXIETY DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME?



It is natural to worry about things we cannot control, but when these fears start to take over our lives, it is important to recognise this and to try to do something about it. Here are some useful websites and resources to look at.

There are web links from Young Minds, the Child Mind Institute and the Anna Freud Centre about what to do if your child is feeling anxious about coronavirus.

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>
- <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/>

Special Needs Jungle has some ideas about how to support children with anxiety around coronavirus, including an easy-read explanation for children and adults with learning difficulties: <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/calming-coronavirus-anxiety-children-everyone-else/#Update>

Young people age 11-25 years can contact Kooth confidentially

- <https://www.kooth.com>

'Mind' also has ideas to support your wellbeing

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

There are also resources to support emotional well-being, such as:

- Free colouring activities to support emotional well being - <https://diaryofajournalplanner.com/free-mindfulness-colouring-sheets/>
- Games cards to support well-being - <http://www.unm.edu/~unmvlcib/gamification/cards/mindfulgamescards.pdf>
- Mindfulness classes for children are offering free live mindfulness classes for children - <https://www.mindfulschools.org/>
- Calm have lots of resources for all ages – <https://www.calm.com>
- A workbook on understanding and coping with emotions during this time – <https://otherlifelessons.com/>

4. HOW DO WE MANAGE OUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AS A FAMILY WHEN STAYING AT HOME DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC?

It may be the first time you are having to stay home with your children during term time. Not going to school can seem exciting at first, but the reality of being stuck at home and not seeing friends is very different.

Children and young people not only hear everything that is going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. Like you, they have never experienced anything like this before.

The sudden change in routine and related strain of having to stay indoors and socially distancing, as well as constant news flashes may cause stress in some families. This may impact both your own and **your child's emotional well-being**.

Over the coming weeks, you may see an increase in behaviour issues with your child **whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally**. You may see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behaviour. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

Your children need to feel comforted and loved and to feel **like it's all going to be ok**.



What to do if your child is feeling anxious

- **Listen, acknowledge, and empathise**, even if your child is being challenging. These are confusing and difficult times. It is normal to feel stressed and anxious.
- **Reassure them they are safe. It's ok to feel upset.** Share how you deal with your own stress.
- **Be positive.** When a child's behaviour is difficult, the good things can be overlooked. Tell them you are pleased about something. Give them attention, a hug, or a smile.
- **Offer rewards.** Reward them for behaving well. Praise them or give them their favourite food. **Be specific, for example, say something like "Well done for putting your toys back when I asked."**
- **Build in relaxation exercises and breathing exercises** into your daily routine with your family. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Do them as a family.
- **Acknowledge their worries and reassure.** Your child might be feeling anxious about the health of a loved one such as a grandparent. Reassure them that all measures are being taken to keep loved ones safe.
- **Explain why we are socially distancing** and not able to visit friends or family. Suggest a video call to help them to feel connected.
- **Create a safe space** where they can go to reflect. Your child may at times may feel overwhelmed. They can gather their thoughts, or just calm down and relax.
- **Limit your family's exposure to news coverage** of the event including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and be frightened.
- **If you have significant worries** about your **child's emotional well-being** during this time, and you are worried about keeping them safe call: 111.

Important things to remember:

Try not to worry if you feel they are not learning enough. Every child is in this situation and they will be ok.

When they are back in the classroom, their teachers will support them with where they are.

Children and young people's mental health is more important than whether they are following strict schedules of maths or literacy activities. Try not to shout and argue if your child does not want to do work. Try not to insist on two hours of learning time if they are resisting it. How they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during this time. Keep this in mind, every single day.



Create a routine for your child

For some, the idea of staying in their pyjamas all day is the best part about not being in school. However, washing and getting dressed will not only improve their state of mind, it will also psychologically prepare them for the day ahead.

Stick to routines, e.g. go to bed at a reasonable hour everyday so that they get enough sleep and wake up at their usual time.

Create a visual list of activities that the children could do and things to look forward to

You may want to create a minute by minute schedule for your child. You may have high hopes of hours of learning. **You'll limit technology until everything is done!** But the children are just as scared as we are right now. Tear up your perfect schedule and spend some quality time with the children.

Spend time, play, and have fun with your child

Here are some ideas about what you could do together:

- Cooking and baking
- Painting pictures
- Play creative games or board games
- Watch movies
- Do a science experiment together
- Find virtual school trips of the zoo
- Enjoying music together
- Encourage journaling (writing their experiences of what they think and feel about what is happening) If your child feels comfortable you could discuss this together
- Start a book and read together as a family
- Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing

Help your child maintain their friendships

This will help support their resilience and maintain their social network during social distancing.

Supervise screen time

Ensure appropriate content filters are active. Try to ensure they a range of activities each day.

Restrict access to rolling news coverage

At the moment it might be overwhelming. Try to protect your child from distressing media coverage.

5: WHICH ACTIVITIES CAN I DO AT HOME TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING AND WELL BEING?

Work will have been suggested by your schools. It is important you follow the guidelines and information shared by the school. There are many websites available and it is difficult to know which ones to look at. We would like to suggest a few useful websites.



It may be hard for parents and carers to encourage their children to engage with learning at home. Offer a range of activities to inspire and motivate children and for adults to have fun and learn too.

The resources have been split up into curriculum-based activities and those which are more creative and fun.

Literacy activities

- <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/blog/how-to-utilise-twinkl-during-the-coronavirus-shutdown-a-guide-for-schools>
- <https://www.storylineonline.net>
- <https://www.turtlediary.com>
- <https://www.e-learningforkids.org/>
- <https://www.seussville.com/>
- <https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>
- <http://www.literactive.com/Home/index.asp>
- <https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>
- <https://uk.ixl.com/>
- <https://www.haringey.gov.uk/libraries-sport-and-leisure/libraries/ebooks-and-audiobooks>

Maths activities

- <https://www.myhomeschoolmath.com/visualperception.html>
- <http://www.amathsdictionaryforkids.com/>
- <https://www.10ticks.co.uk/>
- <https://www.coolmath4kids.com/>
- <http://www.mathgametime.com/>

More learning activities

- <https://ed.ted.com/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- <https://www.playworks.org/resource/fun-paper-and-pencil-games-to-play/>
- <https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>
- <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
- <https://allinonehomeschool.com/>
- https://media.craftyarnCouncil.com/files/teach/WUA-PTG_Bk_web_5.pdf
- <https://www.starfall.com/h/>
- www.kids-science-experiments.com
- <https://www.switchzoo.com/>
- <https://www.abcya.com/>
- <https://www.funbrain.com/>
- <https://www.splashlearn.com/>
- <https://www.highlightskids.com/>
- www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk
- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>
- <https://www.howstuffworks.com/>

Best wishes

Social distancing and self-isolation can be really hard to deal with. There is much that each one of us can do to support each other during this time. Staying connected with friends will help to lift moods and help decrease loneliness.

We do not know exactly the long-term impact and outcome on our society, but it won't go on forever. There are many things that we can do to manage our day, our children's learning and to reduce anxiety and fears during this time.

