

Looking after your mental health and wellbeing (taken from advice and guidance by CWAC Child and Educational Psychology Service)

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete. This document is intended to provide you with information, advice and tips to help you look after both your own health and wellbeing and that of children and young people.

Be kind to yourself.

- It is important to acknowledge that living in times of stress can have an impact on our short term and longer-term wellbeing.
- Our ability to complete tasks we would previously manage more easily may be limited. We are likely to find it harder to focus our attention for extended periods, we are more likely to forget things and we will find it harder to process information effectively.
- When we are living with anxiety for ourselves, our loved ones and the wider community, it is to be expected that we will be expending significant amounts of emotional energy in managing the thoughts and feelings that this will bring.
- It is natural that we will find it harder to plan for longer term goals as we are designed to focus on more immediate needs at times of stress and anxiety. We are likely to find that it is harder to manage our emotions and we will find that strong emotions are triggered more easily.
- As we turn to social media and news outlets to make sense of what is happening in the world, we are surrounded by images not only of illness and fear but also of people seemingly completing admirable feats: from taking huge risks with their own physical wellbeing when providing key services, to managing to home school children, learn new skills and even complete fabulous DIY projects. We need to remember that our ability to be resilient in a situation cannot be compared with these snippets of others' lives.

Acknowledge the things you are managing well, focus on what you need to do to stay well and above all be kind to yourself. Further advice and ideas are available here: <https://kindtoyourmind.org/>

Looking after yourself

Time is precious, especially when looking after children and family, but on the days when you feel like you can move towards taking greater care of your own wellbeing, try to plan to include something from each of the '**Five Ways to Wellbeing**' (developed by the New Economics Foundation).



For more helpful information, Mind's Five Ways to Wellbeing can be found here:
<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Looking after your children

Children will need what they've always needed; love, attention and opportunities to learn and play.

If children are home for long periods because of social-distancing or self-isolation, the following tips might be helpful:

- Try and keep to a structure and routine that suits you. Promote a sense of normality that children will find reassuring. Encouraging them to get up and dressed during the week will help maintain some difference between weekdays and weekends.
- Keep boundaries firm and make it clear that you expect the same standards of behaviour as usual. Boundaries show that adults are still in control and taking care of them, which helps children to feel safe.
- Make sure they get some time to burn off energy every day.
- Try to encourage children to do some learning every day.
- Find opportunities for them to interact with their friends remotely.
- Balance screen time with other activities.
- Give children opportunities to have a say in what will be happening.

One way to provide structure is to have a timetable. However, if you find that the day changes spontaneously, that's OK- it's important that we remain kind to ourselves.

Example Timetable

Get ready for the day	<input type="checkbox"/> Have breakfast, have a wash, get dressed
9am Activity 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Online learning from school OR a craft activity (cutting and sticking, painting, baking)
10am Activity 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Online learning from school OR some writing or maths - write a story, count coins
11am Get active!	<input type="checkbox"/> Play in the garden, do an exercise video
12 Lunchtime	
1pm Help about the house	<input type="checkbox"/> Help tidy up, Hoover, wash up
2pm Quiet time	<input type="checkbox"/> Do something calm, like reading or colouring
3pm Activity 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Online learning from school OR be creative – make some music, design an outfit
4pm Have some free time	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy toys and tech
5pm Dinner time	<input type="checkbox"/> Help prepare dinner – help tidy up too!
6pm Family time	<input type="checkbox"/> Play a game, watch a movie, spend time together

Talking to children about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although it's tempting to try and protect children from difficult topics, they are more likely to worry when they're kept in the dark. Children and teenagers will be aware of what is happening but may not have all the facts they need to understand it.

These tips will help you communicate about Coronavirus with Children and Young People:

- Take time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that they have. Be led by the child as they may not be that interested or want to know everything all at once. Try to answer any questions honestly but keep things in context e.g. *"Sadly, some people do die, but the vast majority of people will recover, and children seem to be only mildly affected"*.
- Reassure them that their own risk is very low but that we all need to 'do our bit' to look after people who might be very unwell. Underline how helpful they are being by following the rules about hygiene and social-distancing. Knowing we're being altruistic helps us to cope with the tough times.
- Reassure children with underlying health conditions that they are reducing their risk by self-isolating.
- Demonstrate empathy. Tell them *"I understand that you feel scared/ sad/ etc and it's ok to feel that way"*. It's helpful if we don't hide our own feelings, when appropriate to share them depending on their nature and the ages and skills of the children.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing as a school and/or family to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.
- Keep explanations developmentally appropriate:

- o Young children up to about age seven will need very simple explanations that relate to their own experiences. Explain that, like other germs, Coronavirus can spread between people and make them ill. But because Coronavirus is a new germ that we don't know everything about, we need to take more care and so things might be a bit different for a while.
- o Older children and tweens will want to know more. They may have heard partial explanations and 'filled in the gaps' themselves with their own ideas, so check what they already think they know about it.
- o Teenagers will have a similar capacity to understand what's going on as adults. They will need calm, factual information and opportunities to talk through their worries and disappointments.
 - Give them an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Our instinct might be to 'make it all better', but it is normal to feel scared, sad and angry in the face of what's happening. Tell them that what is happening is not normal but that their feelings are.

Helpful resources for talking to CYP about Coronavirus:

<https://krisepsykologi.no/what-can-we-say-to-children-about-coronavirus/>

This is an informative animation for older children and young people:

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

A comic exploring coronavirus to help young people understand:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus?t=1584464333506>

Newsround video:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366?fbclid=IwAR3CyZq5rzXVoyGCgWjjpx6YqoetuZ1tP16y7wMjUR6uwgWYhRmf0aFTTrAs>

Drs Chris and Xand explain what's happening

Wellbeing and Keeping Active (local and national links are included):

Suggestions for Free online exercise classes

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/coronavirus-home-workout-exercise-class-yoga-dance-kids-elderly-joe-wicks-a9421126.html>

Sport England have relaunched their <http://sportengland.org/> webpage to advise how to keep active while at home. It now includes resources on workouts you can do indoors with your children.

PE with Joe Wicks – daily PE lessons via YouTube

<https://youtu.be/Rz0go1pTda8>

If you are tight for space, **Disney dance-along videos** created by This Girl Can are a fun and compact way to exercise. <https://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/activities/disney-workouts/>

They also have links to games and activities for indoor play that means kids will be up and moving throughout the day.
<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities/indoor-activities>

Cosmic Kids Yoga

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga/featured>

Being Active Cheshire: Active Cheshire have also launched a campaign called **#ActiveHour**. The aim is to encourage people to stay healthy and active while we are working from home during the period of isolation. Every day between 1-2pm, upload a video of you getting active in your own way and share it on social media using the **#ActiveHour**. Remember to tag @ActiveCheshire so we can share your videos to inspire others. Why not make your own Active Hour hashtag? Make sure you tag us so we can share the great things you are doing to keep active!

Brio Leisure: Brio have live streamed Mindfulness, Falls Prevention (Otago) and low impact GP exercise classes this week. They also have specific sessions for children to get involved. Full details of the Twitter schedule and messaging can be found on Twitter @CChangeHub or www.Cheshirechangehub.org

NHS: the NHS have a range of tools to help you get active:-

- fitness studio exercise videos
- Active 10 walking app
- couch to 5K: week by week
- flexibility exercises - these home exercises help to improve mobility
- balance exercises - simple home exercises to improve steadiness with walking and moving
- strength exercises - home exercises to improve lower limb strength
- seated exercises - these exercises from the NHS improve mobility and lower limb strength, which helps with feeling steadier to move onto standing exercises

Bereavement:

Child Bereavement UK <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Winston's wish - specific information about coronavirus

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people/>

Winston's Wish - How to say goodbye when a funeral is not possible

https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/?utm_source=Winston%27s+Wish+newsletter&utm_campaign=948985d4

40- email_newsletter_2020_04_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d9f3f2fa6f-948985d440-404890297

Cruse Bereavement Care <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

The Lullaby Trust <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/our-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Reflections on grief and loss by Dr Karen Treisman - video on YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=327&v=n9a79NeUARo&feature=emb_logo

Child Bereavement UK Org and provides information regarding support for children and young people with additional needs specifically:
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=74e7be4a-022a-4400-a398-bd6922440292>

This link from Childhood Bereavement UK is aimed at supporting children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder specifically:
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e99e1f53-01c0-4112-bfa4-e2a58dfb4e24>

For the most up to date information and guidance please refer to:

The latest Government guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS Advice
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

The Mental Health Foundation: <https://mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>

Looking after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak

This contains a useful general overview and advice to:

- Try to avoid speculation and look up reputable sources on the outbreak
- Try to stay connected
- Talk to your children
- Try to anticipate distress
- Try not to make assumptions

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

How to look after your mental wellbeing while staying at home

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

Young People with symptoms of anxiety and depressions have written their own guide to self-care with the Anna Freud Centre and the pack can be found here:
<https://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus/>

General – for Young People

www.kooth.com

Kooth will continue to provide online mental health and wellbeing support to young people via any internet accessible device. Kooth provides an opportunity to interact in a supportive way with other young people as well as receive support from a qualified counsellor. To find out more visit www.Kooth.com where young people can register and others can find out more about the service.

You can also view a short video about the service at: <https://vimeo.com/318731977/a9f32c87de>.

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.keep-your-head.com

<https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/>

General – for Parents

Samaritans

Call 116 123

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Mind UK

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/support-community-elfriends/>

UK Mental Health Charity with information and an online mutual support community

Anyone can talk to a dedicated Mental Health professional, including children, young people and all adult age groups 24/7. This is through the new NHS Mental Health Crisis Line open to provide access to Mental Health 24-hour support run by NHS CWP Trust staff. This telephone line is for anyone who may need support in and across Wirral, Cheshire West and Cheshire East. **The number is 0300 303 3972.**

Parenting pressures

Family Action

Telephone: 0808 802 6666

Text message: 07537 404 282

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/familyline/>

The FamilyLine service supports people who are dealing with family pressures in a new and innovative way by using a network of volunteers from across the country to support family members over the age of 18 through telephone calls, email, web chat and text message.

Family Lives (previously Parentline)

Call: 0808 800 2222

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/>

Family Lives offers a confidential and free helpline service for families in England and Wales (previously known as Parentline) for emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life. The helpline service is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday

Gingerbread

Single Parent Helpline: 0808 802 0925

gingerbread.org.uk

One Parent Families/Gingerbread is the leading national charity working to help lone parents and their children.

Grandparents Plus

Call: 0300 123 7015

grandparentsplus.org.uk

Grandparents Plus is the only national charity (England and Wales) dedicated to supporting kinship carers - grandparents and other relatives raising children who aren't able to live with their parents.

Improve Sleep:

Feelings of uncertainty and changes to daily life may mean you have more difficulty sleeping. Trying to go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even at the weekend if you can, and get some natural sunlight helps to regulate your body clock which can help you sleep better.

Alternatively, you could aim to stop worrying about sleep or trying so hard to sleep:

<https://stevenchayes.com/having-a-hard-time-sleeping-do-nothing/>