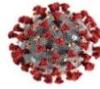


# Supporting your child at this time



## What should I tell my child?

- Children have amazing resilience and are less likely to worry if they know what's going on so don't be afraid to discuss Covid-19 with them.
- If they get fact-based information they are more likely to be reassured.
- Look at any conversation as a opportunity to be factual and set the emotional tone.
- Speak calmly and reassuringly, trying not to seem upset.

**It will not always be possible to provide answers** to all the questions children and young people may ask, or to allay all their concerns, so focus on listening and acknowledging their feelings to help them feel supported.

Try saying something like,  
*“Even though we don't have all the answers right now, once we know more we'll let you know too.”*

## Follow your child's lead.

Some may want to spend a long time talking, others may not seem interested or don't ask many (any) questions. That's OK. Don't offer more detail than your child is interested in.





Let them know lots of people will be feeling worried and scared- This is **normal**

- Talk through some reasons they may feel upset or worried

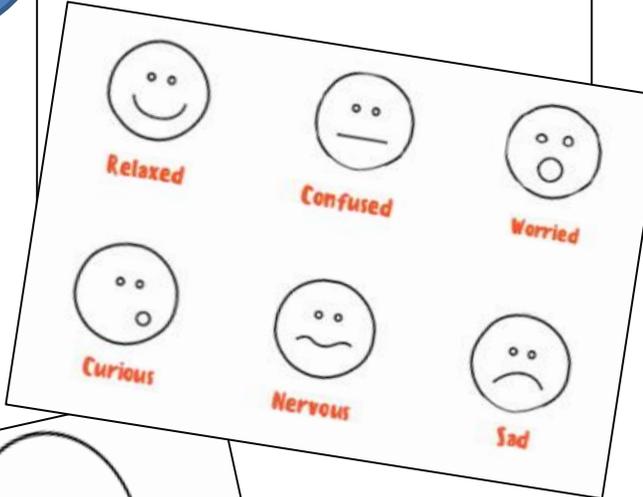
Worried about family

Missing friends

Feeling bored or lonely

Scared that they will get poorly

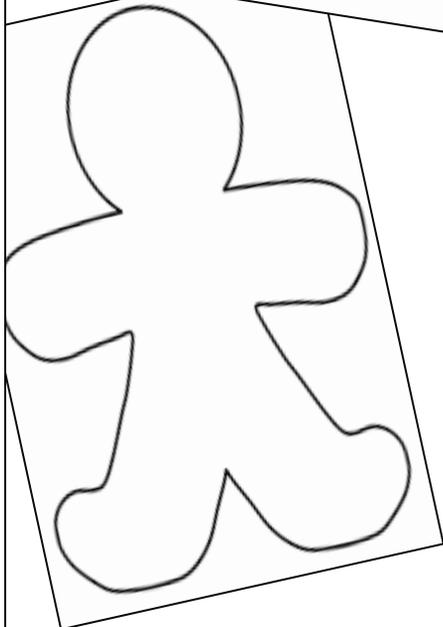
**Talk about emotions.** It will really help if your child can express how they are feeling. Some of these words might be new to your child so spend some time talking them through. The accompanying booklet, 'My name is **Coronavirus**' will have activities for them to explore these emotions further. Perhaps start with these:



Talk about the **normal** physical changes that happen when we feel anxious. These may include:

- Tummy ache or feeling sick
- Sweating
- Racing thoughts
- Heart beating faster
- Changes in our breathing
- Tense muscles or shaking

You could draw these onto a body shape to get your child thinking about their physical feelings. Let them know these are our normal reactions to anxiety and will soon go away on their own.



## Give children time and space to share their feelings.

Spend some time doing a positive activity with your child e.g. playing, reading, painting. As well as being a great way to reduce their anxiety, it's also a good way to provide some space for them to talk. Here are suggested conversation starters as you play together.

How are you feeling today?

I bet you can't wait to see your friends again

I wonder what your classroom will look like when you go back?

What have you enjoyed about today?

Is there anything I can help with today?

When I feel worried I ....  
What do you do?



# Useful Links

- Place2Be - a 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/>
- Young Minds have a really useful page about talking to your child about Coronavirus and the whole site has many tips for keeping the whole family mentally healthy:  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>
- A free resource is 'Coronavirus, A Book for Children' which is fact-based and child-friendly with lovely illustrations. Available at:  
<https://nosycrow.com/blog/released-today-free-information-book-explaining-coronavirus-children-illustrated-gruffalo-illustrator-axel-scheffler/>
- A website with lots of tips for frugal things to do. The site is in categories and 'Indoor Fun' is worth a look:  
[www.familydaystriedandtested.com](http://www.familydaystriedandtested.com)
- If you are looking for things of a more academic nature, this website has free access to lots of ideas including videos by teachers that demonstrate fun learning opportunities to be recreated at home. It includes a competition zone and a parent zone too: [www.offschool.org.uk](http://www.offschool.org.uk)
- The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families have produced excellent guidance and tips for ensuring the wellbeing of children and parents. Available at: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>
- There is a lot of useful information at:  
<http://www.durham.gov.uk/covid19mentalhealth>



**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 outbreak. Understanding these may help you to know how to support your family.**

## Changes to look out for:

**Children 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, they may wet the bed), or physical (for example, they may experience stomach aches).**

**Children may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.**

**Children who communicate differently to their peers may rely on you to interpret their feelings.**

**Listen to them, acknowledge their concerns, and give them extra love and attention if they need it.**





**3 to 6-year olds.** Younger children may return to behaviours they have outgrown. For example, toileting accidents, bed-wetting, or being frightened about being separated from their parents or caregivers. They may also have tantrums or difficulty sleeping.

**7 to 10-year olds.** Older children may feel sad, angry, or afraid. Peers may share false information but parents or caregivers 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.





# Create a new routine



Plan time outside if you can do so safely or see [Change4Life](#) for some ideas for indoor games and activities

Make a plan for the day or week that includes time for learning, playing and relaxing



Don't forget that sleep is really important for mental and physical health so try to keep to existing bedtime routines.



# If your child is accessing mental health services such as CAMHS...

If your children have an existing mental health problem they may find the current uncertainty around the coronavirus outbreak particularly difficult.



Contact your child's mental health support team to discuss any concerns and check how care will continue to be accessed while you are at home.

# Looking After Yourself

## Looking after yourself is also very important

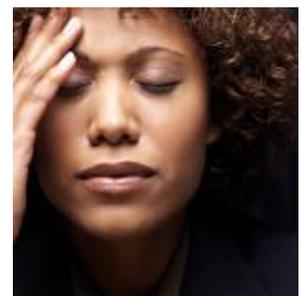
- Our world is changing rapidly at the moment. Given some of the news coverage, it would be hard not to worry about what it all means for yourself, and for those you love.

### When does worry become a problem?

- Everyone worries to some degree, and some thinking ahead can help us to plan and cope. There is no 'right' amount of worry. We say that worry becomes a problem when it stops you from living the life you want to live, or if it leaves you feeling demoralised and exhausted.

### What can I do about worry?

- It is natural for you to worry at the moment, but if you feel that it's becoming excessive and taking over your life – for example if it's making you anxious, or if you're struggling to sleep – then it might be worth trying to find ways to limit the time you spend worrying, and taking steps to manage your well-being.
- **Maintain balance in your life.** Psychologists think that well-being comes from living a life with a balance of activities that give you feelings of pleasure, achievement and closeness. The *Activity Menu* on the following page contains suggestions of activities to help you to distract yourself during this difficult time and stay active. Remember that we're social animals – we need connections to thrive and flourish.



making a

difference

together

# An Activity Menu To Give You Some Ideas To Stay Occupied

## Watch

A movie  
A TV show  
A YouTube video  
Something funny  
A new TV show or movie

## Animals

Pet an animal  
Walk a dog  
Listen to the birds  
Stroke a cat

## Expression

Laugh  
Cry  
Sing  
Shout  
Express yourself

## Music

Listen to music you like  
Find some new music to listen to  
Turn on the radio Make some music  
Play an instrument  
Listen to a podcast

## Connect with people

Contact a friend Join a new group  
Join a political party  
Send a message to a friend  
Write a letter to a friend  
Reconnect with an old friend

## Clean

Clean the house  
Clean the yard  
Do the washing up  
Fill/empty the dishwasher  
Do laundry  
Organise your workspace

## Kindness

Help a friend/stranger  
Try a random act of kindness  
Do someone a favour  
Teach somebody a skill  
Plan a surprise for someone  
Make a list of your good points  
Make a list of things or people you are grateful for

## Cook

Cook a meal for yourself  
Cook a meal for someone else  
Bake a cake  
Find a new recipe  
Plan a menu for a week

## Be active

Go for a walk  
Go for a run Go for a swim  
Go cycling  
Use an exercise video at home  
Try Tai Chi or Qigong  
Dance Try Pilates

## Create

Draw  
Paint  
Take a photograph  
Organise photographs  
Make a photograph album  
Craft  
Start a scrapbook  
Sew/knit

## Play

Play a board game  
Learn to juggle  
Play card games  
Play charades  
Play brain games  
Make a 'Happy Box'

## Mind

Daydream  
Meditate Pray Reflect  
Practise yoga  
Try mindfulness  
Do a jigsaw  
Get up extra early and watch the sunrise  
Do nothing and be silent for 5 minutes

## Learn

Something new  
A new skill, fact or language  
Watch a tutorial video  
Visit an online museum, art gallery or zoo

## Nature

Try some gardening  
Plant something Do some pruning  
Mow the lawn Pick flowers  
Go for a walk in nature Sit in the sun

## Plan

Set a goal Create a budget  
Make a 5 year plan Make a 'to do' list  
Make a 'bucket list' Make a shopping list  
Tick something off your 'to do' list

## Read

Read a favourite book  
Read a new book Read the newspaper  
Read your favourite website Download an audio book

## Self-care

Take a bath or shower  
Wash your hair  
Give yourself a facial  
Trim your nails  
Sunbathe (wear sunscreen!)  
Reward yourself

## Try something new

New food  
New app  
New clothes  
Read a new book  
Do something spontaneous  
Volunteer for a good cause

## Write

A letter with compliments  
A grateful letter  
A 'thank you' card  
A journal/diary  
Create your CV  
Write poetry

## Mend

Repair something  
Make something new  
Change a lightbulb  
Decorate a room  
Move your furniture around