

# COVID-19 advice for parents

It is important to familiarise yourself with the current national advice regarding COVID-19 social distancing measures and what do if you or a member of your household present with a high temperature or a new persistent cough. Find out more [\[here\]](#)

Given that the current COVID-19 outbreak is a highly uncertain and a constantly developing situation, it is understandable for you and your family to feel worried and anxious at this time. In addition to this, with the amount of information we are faced with on a daily basis from the news, it is easy for us all to feel a little overwhelmed. Our daily lives have changed drastically and we are all doing our best to adapt to this difficult situation.

In an attempt to reduce the need for trawling through the endless amount of information, the Wakefield Educational Psychology Service have collated good quality advice from a range of reputable and reliable sources, which you may find useful. In the following pages, you will find practical information and **advice** for individuals and families during this period of isolation, under three headings;

- Maintaining positive physical and mental wellbeing
- Advice for home education
- Managing anxieties

## Maintaining positive physical and mental wellbeing

It is likely many people at this time are feeling increased levels of stress and anxiety. There are lots of things we can try that could help our wellbeing. Wellbeing can be defined as a “positive physical, social and mental state”. Below you will find information and ideas of ways to look after your own and your families’ wellbeing.

### Physical wellbeing

It is important we consider our physical health at this time, as it has an important influence on our overall wellbeing. Make sure you’re eating a healthy diet (at regular times), staying hydrated, taking time to relax each day and sleeping well. Being physically active can also have a huge impact on our wellbeing. Even a short burst of 10 minutes brisk walking increases our mental alertness, energy and positive mood. There are many ways the whole family can get active! There is also a wealth of free resources online for inspiration, see the last page in the booklet for more information/links.

### Social wellbeing

At this time of social distancing, finding a way to staying connected to a support network can provide us all a sense of belonging and safety. Furthermore friendships are a key resiliency factor for children and young people, therefore it is important to children to stay connected to their friends during these difficult times. Keep up digital communication via text, email, WhatsApp, video chats etc.

### Mental wellbeing

It is normal for you and your children to be experiencing feelings of anxiety and worry during these uncertain times. It is vital as parents to maintain your own positive mental health, to ensure we can effectively look after those around us. It is important to take proactive steps to ensure our own positive wellbeing and adjustment to our current situation. See Dr Russ Harris’s set of practical steps (‘FACE COVID’) for more detail on positive and effective ways of coping.

## Tips for maintaining positive mental wellbeing...

**Disrupt unhelpful thoughts** by paying attention to the present moment. Unhelpful thoughts can influence how we feel and act. Be present to your own thoughts and redirect attention on negative thoughts to the physical world and encourage children to do the same. See more info on mindfulness

**Place an emphasis on resilience and strengths:** Focus on the child's skills, in terms of their daily life. Help them see they have many strengths to help them cope if feeling anxious or upset.

**Create time for relaxation and recreation:** to counter increased levels of stress, it is important to have protected time built into the daily routine for activities that bring you and your family peace and enjoyment. See info on relaxation. Additionally, mastering a new skill can increase self-confidence and create a sense of purpose. There are many activities and your family could try, see the last page of this booklet for ideas

**Set goals:** Prioritise what is important and set realistic goals for the day. This will give you and your child a sense of achievement and progress over time.

**Emotional check in and time to talk:** Set aside time to talk things through and address any worries your child might have. Normalise the experience and let your children know it is alright to be upset. Normalising the experience is likely to reduce anxiety for many children

**Maintaining daily Routines:** Structure and predictability can minimise the impact of stress. It is important to establish and maintain a meaningful routine for the days to come and to take control of those areas of our lives we can. This may include wake up/bed times, the course of the home-school day (including start/finishing times, break times, subject order), meal planning, home activity planning. Where appropriate it may be beneficial for children to be included in planning of the day. A consistent routine lets everyone be secure about the plans for the day. It is okay if your routine is not perfect, these are unprecedented times and what is most important is that you find what works for you and your family. See last page of this booklet for timetable example

**Don't forget to Play!** Play is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development – children of all ages! It's also a great way to reduce stress in adults

## Advice for Home Education

During the lockdown it is asked that children not accessing school will be taking part in some home educating via family/carers. This can feel daunting but there is plenty of advice and guidance out there to help you with this.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) has published some guidance around this aimed at advising Schools and parent/carers –

### BPS Guidance

The Department for Education (DoE) has published a list of online educational resources –

### DoE Learn at home links

Below is a further list of free resources and websites that offer ideas and guidance around home education in a wide variety of subjects and activities –

**IXL:** Lots of resources for every age in varying subjects

<https://uk.ixl.com/>

**Outschool.com:** 10k+ small group video chat classes and free to join

<https://outschool.com/>

**Teachers Pay Teachers:** 3M+ resources tailored to level and interest

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/>

**BrainPop:** Offering free access to those affected by school shutdowns with 1,000 short animated movies for students in grades K-12 (ages 6 to 17)

<https://www.brainpop.com/>

**Khan Academy:** Free learning center in 40 languages with content for parents, teachers and learners (starting ages 2+ with Khan Academy Kids)

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>

**Modulo:** Tools and access to learning specialists, free for parents affected by school closures

<https://www.modulo.app/covid19>

**Mystery Science:** Offering its most popular content for free due to school closings (K-5)

<https://mysteryscience.com/>

**Exploratorium Learning Toolbox:** science and learning activities and more

<https://www.exploratorium.edu/learn>

**Nasa Kids Club:** Resources for parents, teachers and caregivers

<https://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/index.html>

**Deep Space Sparkle:** Hundreds of activity ideas and free projects

<https://www.deepspacesparkle.com/>

**KinderArt:** Art projects for all ages

<https://kinderart.com/>

**GoNoodle:** Dance and movement activities for kids

<https://www.gonoodle.com/>

**Teacher Toolkit:** Lots of resources and links with ideas on many subjects

<https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2020/03/15/how-to-teach-online/>

**Chatterpack:** Home Learning Resources List for Schools and Families

<https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/resources-list-for-home-learning>

**Joe Wicks:** Guided PE - 9a.m every week day

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>





**Mo Willems:** Guided art sessions - 5pm every week day

<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/mo-willems/>

## Managing Anxieties

This pandemic is very new, therefore naturally there is a lot of uncertainty and anxiety around the outbreak. Here we have provided some information regarding how these anxieties might present, in both adults and young people, and how to go about managing these feelings of anxiety.

This extract is pulled from Mind.org.HK (see in useful links below), helping explain why we might be feeling anxious at this time:

“Our thoughts (how we think about things) are **interlinked with how we feel emotionally and physically.**

If our minds are filled with a lot of ‘catastrophic’ and anxious thoughts (e.g. “I won’t be able to keep my family safe during this outbreak”), then this is likely going to make us feel emotionally distressed and anxious, and in turn, **may impact us physically** - e.g. sleeping difficulties, poor appetite, difficulty concentrating, tiredness and low energy.

**Changes in our mental well-being can compromise our physical health and wellbeing,** which may make us more vulnerable towards becoming physically unwell (i.e. making us more susceptible to contracting seasonal flu-like symptoms).

Most people will feel anxious at times and it’s particularly common to experience some anxiety while coping with stressful events, changes or situations that we have little control over, especially if they could have a big impact on your life.

**It is therefore really important to be aware of our feelings and to learn to recognise when we, or others around us, are becoming overwhelmed.”** (Mind.org.HK, p10, 2020)



**Those potentially at greater risk of experiencing anxiety as a result of the threat of coronavirus:**

- Individuals who experience high levels of anxiety more generally, or who experience health-related anxiety
- Individuals who have experienced the death of a key attachment figure (e.g. a parent, carer, or other close relative), particularly if the figure died of a similar condition
- Individuals with close family members who are at high risk (either through age or a pre-existing condition), or who are at high risk themselves
- Individuals who 'over-expose' themselves to concerning and potentially inaccurate information about coronavirus.

**Behaviours associated with high levels of anxiety or perceived threat might include:**

- Carrying out extensive research into coronavirus (to the extent that this interferes with other daily activities)
- Compulsive handwashing
- Being unable to sleep
- A reluctance to attend nursery/school/college – reduced attendance
- New heightened anxiety on separating from the primary caregiver.

**Useful links in explaining why we might be feeling anxious and how it might present:**

**Mind.org.hk (p. 10)**

<https://www.mind.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ResponseCoronavirusENG6.2.2020-.pdf>

**Children's guide to coronavirus – Children's commissioner (p. 3)**

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/cco-childrens-guide-to-coronavirus.pdf>

## **Tips for coping with anxiety**

There is extensive information regarding how best to cope with anxiety in these times of uncertainty, here we have included specific tips given by the NHS along with some links to reputable, reliable sources of information.

### **NHS – Every Mind Matters- Anxiety Tips**

1. Stay connected
2. Talk about your worries
3. Support and help others
4. Feel prepared
5. Look after your body
6. Stick to the facts
7. Stay on top of your difficult feelings
8. Do things your enjoy
9. Focus on the present
10. Look after your sleep.

## **Useful links for guidance in managing anxiety:**

### **NHS – Every Mind Matters – Anxiety Tips**

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


<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

### **World Health Organisation – Coping with Stress**

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2)

### **Samaritans**

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/signs-you-may-be-struggling-cope/practical-ways-help-yourself-cope/>



**APA – podcast**

<https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/coronavirus-anxiety>

**Adam Psychology Services – Resource booklet**

[http://www.adampsychologyservices.co.uk/uploads/1/1/4/8/11487073/coping\\_with\\_corona\\_-\\_aps\\_resource\\_pack.pdf](http://www.adampsychologyservices.co.uk/uploads/1/1/4/8/11487073/coping_with_corona_-_aps_resource_pack.pdf)

**Managing anxiety specific to Secondary Age Students:**

**Young Minds**

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>

**Child Mind Institute**

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

**How best to talk to your child regarding the pandemic:**

**UNICEF- How teachers/carers can talk to kids**

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teachers-can-talk-children-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

**BPS – Importance of talking to children**

<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus>

**Social stories/stories with visuals for Primary age children**

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23zxNlbEumpw4oKIM7Xy3VIKnA25b8Gi53N6YiFleKB9Vx0LQypSPYzzq>

## Information, links and references

### Maintaining positive physical and mental wellbeing

#### Physical activities for the family:

- GoNoodle: Dance and movement activities for kids
- Jo Wicks <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>
- Cosmic Kids - Guided Yoga - <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

#### Relaxation and recreation activities:

- yoga
- meditation
- arts and crafts, such as drawing, painting, collage, sewing, craft kits or upcycling
- DIY
- Colouring
- playing musical instruments, singing or listening to music
- writing stories
- **Search “Deep Space Sparkle”** for hundreds of activity ideas and free projects or “KinderArt” for Art projects for all ages

#### Examples of daily timetables (taken from Wilshire council):

##### Example Timetables

<b>Get ready for the day</b>	☐ Have breakfast, have a wash, get dressed	
<b>9am Activity 1</b>	☐ Online learning from school OR a craft activity (cutting and sticking, painting, baking)	
<b>10am Activity 2</b>	☐ Online learning from school OR some writing or maths - write a story, count coins	
<b>11am Get active!</b>	☐ Play in the garden, do an exercise video	
<b>12 Lunchtime</b>		<b>45 mins Academic learning</b>
<b>1pm Help about the house</b>	☐ Help tidy up, Hoover, wash up	<b>45 mins Creative Activities</b>
<b>2pm Quiet time</b>	☐ Do something calm, like reading or colouring	<b>45 mins Exercise</b>
<b>3pm Activity 3</b>	☐ Online learning from school OR be creative – make some music, design an outfit	<b>Have lunch</b>
<b>4pm Have some free time</b>	☐ Enjoy toys and tech	<b>Downtime</b>
<b>5pm Dinner time</b>	☐ Help prepare dinner – help tidy up too!	<b>45 mins Academic learning</b>
<b>6pm Family time</b>	☐ Play a game, watch a movie, spend time together	<b>45 mins Help around the house</b>
<b>Get ready for bed</b>	☐ Have a bath, get pyjamas on, read a story	<b>Free time</b>
		<b>Have dinner</b>
		<b>Contact family and friends - phone, Facetime, email</b>
		<b>Free time</b>
		<b>Get ready for bed</b>

References (information in this booklet adapted from)

<https://www.epinsight.com/post/managing-stress-self-care-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>