

Supporting wellbeing



We understand that this is a difficult time for everyone. You might have noticed signs of increasing anxiety in your child as they are spending more time indoors and outside of their normal routines. These might include:

Children aged 3-6 years:

- Regressing to behaviour they have outgrown, such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting
- Showing greater fear at being separated from you
- Tantrums
- Trouble sleeping

Children aged 7-10 years:

- Expressing sadness, anger or fear
- Sharing false information that they are hearing from their peers or seeing online
- Wanting to talk about Coronavirus all the time
- Not wanting to talk about the current situation at all
- Having trouble concentrating

Preteen and teenaged pupils:

- Acting out – this might include things like picking fights with you or with siblings or abusing alcohol or drugs
- Becoming afraid to leave the house
- Distancing themselves from their friends and family
- Exhibiting intense emotions but being unable to talk about what they're feeling

How to talk to younger children about what is happening?

Children pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they are hearing.

Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts

- Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:

[BBC Newsround hub](#) – regularly updated with information and advice

[#covibook](#) – for under 7s

[Children's guide to coronavirus](#) – a download from the Children's Commissioner to help explain the situation to children

- Teach them how to know if information they find on the internet is reliable. Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information
- Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful

Encourage questions

- This will give them the confidence to reach out, if they have anything to ask
- Be reassuring but honest when answering questions – it is ok if you do not have all the answers
- Be ready to answer the same question over and over – children tend to repeat themselves when they are feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance

Be a role model

- Recognise and manage your own worries first
- Be open about your own feelings and let them know it's normal to be concerned – for example, let them know you are also finding the news a bit worrying and what you are doing to stay calm

Explain how our body's immune system protects us

- It is constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can not and do not need to control this process
- Explain that we are taking precautions against this particular germ because it is a new one which our bodies have not come across before
- Remind them how important it is that they eat healthy food, sleep and exercise, as this helps to fight germs
- If it helps, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild

Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of germs

- Remind them to maintain good hygiene like bathing daily and wearing fresh clothes
- Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they are washing their hands

How to talk to older children about what is happening?

Older children will have the same anxieties about their own health and that of their family and friends as younger children. They are also likely to feel socially isolated, and worried about the result of school closures on their education and what life will be like after the pandemic is over.

In addition to the steps above:

Reassure them

- that when more guidance comes from the school about how grades will be awarded, you'll share this with them as soon as you have it – you could also check that they understand the information you have received so far, in case there are any points of confusion or worry that the school could help to clarify. Adapt this if necessary, in line with how much information you have been able to provide to pupils and parents up to this point

Encourage them to maintain social ties

- relationships are especially important for older children, so give them room to safely keep in contact with their friends

Equip them with accurate information – for example:

- [Mythbusters](#) from the World Health Organization
- [Data visualisation pack](#) from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated)

Share tools to help them manage anxiety

- YoungMinds: [practical steps to take if you're anxious about coronavirus](#)
- Mind: [how to take care of your wellbeing when staying home](#)

If your child struggles with higher level anxiety

Some children are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse.

- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help them calm down
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing
- Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions

If you are worried about your child's anxiety, **YoungMinds** is a charity dedicated to children's mental health.

They have opened a [parents' helpline](#) for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544

Helplines and websites for children and young people

If your child would like to speak with someone confidentially, there are helplines and websites specifically for them.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Shout Free, confidential support via text, available 24/7	Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained crisis volunteer who'll provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving
The Mix Free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem	Call 0808 808 4994 for free (11am to 11pm daily) Access the online community Email The Mix
ChildLine Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem	Call 0800 1111 any time for free Have an online chat with a counsellor (9am to midnight daily) Check out the message boards

Taking care of yourself

It is really important right now to take care of your own physical and mental health. Children are very perceptive, and they react to what they sense from the adults around them.

Here are some things you can do to help keep yourself healthy:

- **Connect with others** – maintain relationships with people you care about through phone and video calls
- **Exercise** – take some time every day to move. You could go for a walk or run. You'll also find lots of fitness videos online for everything from yoga to dance. Find something you enjoy and that makes you feel good
- **Eat healthy meals** – try to keep a well-balanced diet and drink enough water
- **Get some sleep** – being anxious or worried can have a big impact on your sleep. If you are struggling to get a good night's sleep, try to develop a calming bedtime routine – for example, do 10 minutes of yoga or listen to calming music. There are also apps you can download that provide guided meditation to help you get to sleep more quickly
- **Turn off the news** – it is important to keep up to date, but the 24-hour news cycle can make you more anxious. Limit your exposure to the news to only a small amount of time, just enough to know what the latest government guidance is
- **Do things you enjoy** – now that we are all spending more time at home, we can finally take up that hobby we have always meant to learn. Try baking or gardening or learning to knit. These are also great activities we can share with our children
- **Set goals** – it is easy to lose track of the days in our current situation, so it can be helpful to set daily and weekly goals to give us a sense of control and purpose. Examples might be setting a goal of walking for half an hour at least 3 times this week or reading a new book
- **Connect with the outdoors** – depending on where you live, it may not be possible to spend time outside. If you don't have a garden or terrace, you can still open a window to let some fresh air and sunlight in. Put a comfortable chair by the window so you can look outside and get some air as you read a book
- **Talk to someone** – during this difficult time, sharing with family and friends how you're feeling and what you are doing to cope can be helpful for both you and them. There are also helplines you can call for support – we have included a list at the end of this pack

How to make home learning work for your family

We are realistic about what pupils will be able to do during this period, and we want you to be too.

You are not expected to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school.

Simply providing them with some structure at home will help them to adapt.

The following tips are designed to help you create a positive learning environment at home. See what works best for your household.

Create and stick to a routine

- if you can. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!

Involve your children in setting the timetable

- where possible. It is a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it will give them ownership

Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible.

- If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible
- If you have more than 1 child at home, **consider combining their timetables**. For example, they might exercise and do maths together – see what works for your household

Designate a working space if possible,

- at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over

Stick the timetable up on the wall

- so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day

Take stock at the end of each week.

- what is working and what is not? Ask your children, involve them too

Distinguish between weekdays and weekends,

- to separate school life and home life

Give them chores

- to do so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home

Ask them to help you cook and bake

They will probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone

- that is ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits

Please do not worry about your children getting behind with learning. Everyone's in the same boat, and when things get back to normal we'll make sure we get everyone back on track.

Where to find learning resources online?

There are plenty of support for parents online for everything from tools for home learning to PE:

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
BBC Bitesize Online resource for learning and revision. Starting on 20 April, you'll also find daily lessons to support home learning	Website: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
GoNoodle Movement and mindfulness videos for primary children	Website: https://www.gonoodle.com/
STEM.org.uk Free home learning resources for all ages in science, technology, engineering and maths	Website: https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning
Twinkl This popular site for teachers is now offering free daily activities for home learning	Website: https://www.twinkl.co.uk/home-learning-hub

Where to turn to for help?

It is okay to not be okay. We all need someone to talk to sometimes. If you feel overwhelmed, at risk of abuse or experiencing financial need, there are people you can call on for support:

Mental Health

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Mental Health Foundation Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabili-	Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk
Mind A mental health charity	Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) Website: www.mind.org.uk
PAPYRUS Youth suicide prevention society	Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 10pm, and 2pm to 10pm on weekends and bank holi-days) Website: www.papyrus-uk.org
Samaritans Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair	Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) Website: www.samaritans.org.uk
SANE Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers	Website: www.sane.org.uk/support
YoungMinds A charity dedicated to children's mental health	Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm) Website: www.youngminds.org.uk
Cruse Bereavement Care Support for grief and bereavement	Phone: 0808 808 1677 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm) Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Where to turn to for help?

Domestic Violence

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
NSPCC Child protection charity	Phone: 0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child (24-hour helpline) 0800 1111 for children (ChildLine's 24-hour helpline) Website: www.nspcc.org.uk
Refuge Advice on dealing with domestic violence	Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24-hour helpline) Website: www.refuge.org.uk

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Insert local charities, e.g. food banks, local fami-	