

## **Looking after yourself, looking after your children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic:**

### **Information and advice for parents and carers**

*This advice has been collated by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and comes from a range of sources including Wiltshire EPS, the British Psychological Society and CAMHS/NHS resources.*

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. Understandably, this is causing 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 therefore important to not only consider our physical health during such challenging times, but also to pay attention to our mental health.

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'll be to cope with the situation we're having to face.

In this document we are sharing resources which help children and young people, families. This includes the following:

- How to explain to children and young people what the coronavirus is
- Resources to use in these in staying at home with your children
- Resources around well-being.

*Please note that external websites are listed here have been collated by multiple sources and have not all been checked or endorsed by the EPS – please check all resources before you share them with your children*

## Looking after yourself

Taking care of our own emotional wellbeing and checking in on others is something that we can all do, and we need to remember that by looking after our own mental health, we'll be best placed to look after our children. Remember when they tell you on aeroplanes that you need to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others? It's like that.

Time is precious, especially when looking after children. However, try to plan your days or weeks to include something from each of the '5 ways to wellbeing' (developed by NEF).

### BE ACTIVE

Try to make sure that you and your family get regular exercise every day. You Tube has lots of exercise videos for kids and adults. Get children involved in planning their own 'indoor PE'. If current government advice permits, try to get outside once a day either into your garden if you have one or in a place where there are few people. If you can't go out, open the windows for some fresh air and take some time to look at the world outside.

### TAKE NOTICE

Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what's happening in the here and now in your family. Notice and appreciate the small things.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing.

There's lots of good mindfulness apps to try, but if that's not for you, just getting into something you enjoy e.g. cooking, drawing etc and really focussing on it can be just as good.

### CONNECT

Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Social distancing is going to make that trickier, but we're lucky enough to have technology to help us out. Think physical distancing, but social connections.

Social media is great, but if you can, try to have phone calls or even video calls. Arrange to Facetime/Skype a friend for coffee, phone relatives more often than usual.

Whilst it can be helpful to share worries, try to find other things to talk about too.

### GIVE

Research tells us that giving back to our community helps people to feel valuable and makes us happier. We might not be able to contribute to our community in our usual way, but many people will still be able to find ways to give back.

Lots of community groups are setting up schemes that aim to help vulnerable people at this difficult time. If you want to get involved, check out local social media for ideas.

Many of us will not be in a position to offer practical support. We can still offer mutual support to friends and family by checking in with them regularly.

### KEEP LEARNING

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement. Whilst we're busy learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts and worries.

Social-distancing will bring new challenges, but it will give many of us the time to start a new hobby or learn about an area that we've always been interested in.

## Looking after your children

For the most part, children of all ages will need what they've always needed; love, attention and opportunities to learn, interact, move and play. If children are home for long periods because of schools moving to remote learning, social-distancing or self-isolation, the following tips might be helpful:

- **Remember that schools have not 'shut down.'** Although most children will not be able to physically attend school, you will still receive communication from senior leaders and, in some cases, teachers.
- **It is important to hold in mind that children will look to you to see how you are reacting in order to know how to feel.** This period of uncertainty can be unsettling and you may feel shocked or sad that your children will not be able to go into school or experience milestones such as trips, concerts or celebrations in the way that they had expected to. Showing them an example of remaining upbeat, hopeful and discussing the positives or new things that you can try will be helpful.
- **Have a routine and a structure for your weekdays that works for you.** Keeping bedtime and morning routines close to existing ones can promote a sense of normality that children will find reassuring, as can having a plan and a predictable routine for the day. As adults we like to know what is going to happen, and children like this too. A consistent routine lets everyone be secure about the plans for the day.
- **Give children appropriate opportunities to have a say in what will be happening.** They may have had a lot of their freedoms and choices removed for a while and may feel powerless or angry. Older children and teenagers will be more able to understand the risks in too much screen time, too little sleep, inactivity etc. They are more likely to 'buy in' to new rules and routines if they feel that they have a voice. Family meetings where children and adults problem-solve together can be helpful for this.  
[\(https://bristolchildparentsupport.co.uk/ready-family-meetings/\)](https://bristolchildparentsupport.co.uk/ready-family-meetings/)
- **Avoid putting too much pressure on academic work and don't try to replicate a full school timetable.** It won't be possible for a variety of reasons and giving yourself and your children permission to accept this can feel like a burden has lifted. Concentrate on enjoying shared activities and spending time connecting together.
- **Do expect children to do some learning every day** (if they are well enough). In the longer-term schools are likely to provide opportunities for online learning. In the short term, or as extra activities there are a wealth of helpful websites, many of which they will be able to access independently, some are listed later on in this document. Continuing with their learning helps promote a sense of normality and purpose as well as keeping them up to date for when they are back at school.
- **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.
- **Expect stress.** Remember that stress and anxiety are normal feelings for you and your children to experience in uncertain times. Naming these emotions when you sense them can support young people to make sense of them.

- **‘Normalise’ the new experiences.** Remind them that many other children and families around the world are experiencing the same unusual situation.
- **Young people who are transitioning this summer may be disappointed that usual endings and celebrations are likely to be cancelled.** Reassure them that although things will be different this year, their peers are experiencing this together and can support each other. Celebrations will happen, but these may be at a later time or look a little different than expected. Encourage creative ways for them to think about this.
- **Do celebrate their successes and praise their efforts.** To help children feel proud of their learning, they might like to ‘show’ their learning to others, for example taking photographs to show their teachers when they are back at school or by talking about what they have been learning about with other adults they are close to (such as aunts/uncles) over the phone, who can also provide encouragement.
- **Find opportunities for them to interact with their friends remotely.** Younger children may enjoy supervised ‘virtual playdates’ or opportunities to show their friends things they have made or stories that they have been reading. For tweens and teens, contact with their peers is especially important. Technology provides lots of opportunities for older children to connect, chat and game together. But be wary of giving unsupervised access to platforms that you would not normally allow your child onto; the internet still poses the same risks as in normal times. The UK Safer Internet Centre offers guidance on setting up parental controls and filters.
- **Balance screen time with other activities.** Challenge children to learn new skills that don’t involve screens e.g. tying shoe laces, juggling, baking. Older children might want to set their own goals.
- **Try to ensure that you all get some time to burn off energy every day.** Younger children will enjoy assault courses, discos, skipping, etc. Short active games: [www.nhs.uk/10-minute-shake-up/shake-ups](http://www.nhs.uk/10-minute-shake-up/shake-ups). Disney based activities: [www.vitality.co.uk/uk/family/kids/create-play](http://www.vitality.co.uk/uk/family/kids/create-play). GoNoodle: Good energy at home provides ways for families to move and learn together. <https://www.gonoodle.com/good-energy-at-home-kids-games-and-videos/>. Older children and teens might respond better to fitness videos which you could do together as a family.
- **Provide reassurance about exams being cancelled.** Young people may now be concerned about the announcement that exams will not be going ahead as planned this year. They may feel that all their hard work has been for nothing. Let them know how proud you are of the hard work they have been putting into their learning and reassure them that the Prime Minister has said that all young people will get the qualification that they are working towards. Reassure them that the government is working on a plan for their qualifications and trying to minimise any impact on their future study or work plans.
- **Reduce access to rolling news.** It will be important to stay up to date with announcements and developments, but it can be hard to stitch off from constant streams.
- **Introduce time throughout the day for opportunities to reflect on positive moments and things that you all feel grateful for.** This can be through activities such as a gratitude journal, a ‘share a positive/’at least’ game, asking questions such as what are you pleased with or what did you enjoy today, doing a ‘good news’ report, or modelling

these kind of comments to your children; ‘aren’t we lucky that we have... during this time.”

- **Play with your children** – it is fundamental to their development and wellbeing at all age, and it helps reduce stress in adults too!

There are some example timetables on the next page. These are just shared as a guide but may be helpful in terms of thinking about how to maintain some structure and routine throughout days at home. Remember to intersperse activities with breaks, and don’t forget healthy snacks and drinks!

The last pages in this pack have links to websites with helpful ideas and activities covering a range of topics.

## Example Timetables

Get ready for the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have breakfast, have a wash, get dressed</li> </ul>
9am Activity 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online learning from school <b>OR</b> a craft activity (cutting &amp; sticking, painting, baking)</li> </ul>
10am Activity 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online learning from school <b>OR</b> some writing or maths - write a story, count coins</li> </ul>
11am Get active!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play in the garden, do an exercise video</li> </ul>
12pm Lunchtime	
1pm Help about the house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help tidy up, Hoover, wash up</li> </ul>
2pm Quiet time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do something calm, like reading or colouring</li> </ul>
3pm Activity 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online learning from school <b>OR</b> be creative – make some music, design an outfit</li> </ul>
4pm Have some free time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy toys and tech</li> </ul>
5pm Dinner time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help prepare dinner – help tidy up too!</li> </ul>
6pm Family time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play a game, watch a movie, spend time together</li> </ul>
Get ready for bed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a bath, get pyjamas on, read a story</li> </ul>



## 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 your child:

- Take time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that they have. Be led by your child as they may not be that interested or want to know everything all at once. Try to answer any questions honestly and 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 bear the tough times.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing as a family to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.
- Remember your child's age and keep explanations developmentally appropriate.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - 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 children about Coronavirus

- **Covibook**  
<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>  
A short book about Coronavirus for children under 7
- **Newsround video**  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366?fbclid=IwAR3CyZq5rzXVoyGCgWjpx6YqoetuZ1tP16y7wMjUR6uugWyhRmf0aFTAs>  
Drs Chris and Xand explain what's happening
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>

### Resources for children and young people with additional needs:

- A visual story to explain to children: <https://www.thedadsnet.com/this-free-book-is-great-for-explaining-covid-19-coronavirus-to-your-children>
- <https://theautismeducator.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>
- <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>
- <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus> - contains a link to the most up to date version of their "Easy Read" for young people and adults with learning difficulties

## Sources of support

### 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

### General – for young people

*Kooth* is a free to use anonymous digital mental health and wellbeing support and information service available anyone aged 11-25. Support available:

- Drop in/booked online chats with trained counsellors
- Themed message forums (static and live)
- Secure web-based email with a team of counsellors
- Articles regarding mental health and wellbeing

Support can be accessed through [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) 365 days a year, Monday-Friday: 12pm-10pm, Saturday-Sunday: 6pm-10pm. Online resources are accessible any time.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)  
[www.keep-your-head.com](http://www.keep-your-head.com)

### **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](http://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](http://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.

## Resources for home education

Many schools will be setting their own learning. However, if you need something else to keep them usefully occupied then this non-exhaustive list might help those affected by school closures due to coronavirus, compiled by home educators:

Website	Description
<b>Khan Academy</b> <a href="https://www.khanacademy.org">https://www.khanacademy.org</a>	Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it's mostly common material.
<b>BBC Learning</b> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/</a>	This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV license required except for content on BBC iPlayer.
<b>Futurelearn</b> <a href="https://www.futurelearn.com">https://www.futurelearn.com</a>	Free to access 100s of courses, only pay to upgrade if you need a certificate in your name (own account from age 14+ but younger learners can use a parent account).
<b>Seneca</b> <a href="https://www.senecalearning.com">https://www.senecalearning.com</a>	For those revising at GCSE or A level. Tons of free revision content. Paid access to higher level material.
<b>Openlearn</b> <a href="https://www.open.edu/openlearn/">https://www.open.edu/openlearn/</a>	Free taster courses aimed at those considering Open University, but everyone can access it. Adult level, but some e.g. nature and environment courses could well be of interest to young people.
<b>Blockly</b> <a href="https://blockly.games">https://blockly.games</a>	Learn computer programming skills - fun and free.
<b>Scratch</b> <a href="https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/">https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/</a>	Creative computer programming
<b>Ted Ed</b> <a href="https://ed.ted.com">https://ed.ted.com</a>	All sorts of engaging educational videos
<b>National Geographic Kids</b> <a href="https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/">https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/</a>	Activities and quizzes for younger kids.
<b>Duolingo</b> <a href="https://www.duolingo.com">https://www.duolingo.com</a>	Learn languages for free. Web or app.
<b>Mystery Science</b> <a href="https://mysteryscience.com">https://mysteryscience.com</a>	Free science lessons
<b>The Kids Should See This</b> <a href="https://thekidshouldseethis.com">https://thekidshouldseethis.com</a>	Wide range of cool educational videos
<b>Crash Course</b> <a href="https://thecrashcourse.com">https://thecrashcourse.com</a>	You Tube videos on many subjects
<b>Crash Course Kids</b> <a href="https://m.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids">https://m.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids</a>	As above for a younger audience

<b>Crest Awards</b> <a href="https://www.crestawards.org">https://www.crestawards.org</a>	Science awards you can complete from home.
<b>IDEA Awards</b> <a href="https://idea.org.uk">https://idea.org.uk</a>	Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online.
<b>Paw Print Badges</b> <a href="https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk">https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk</a>	Free challenge packs and other downloads. Many activities can be completed indoors. Badges cost but are optional.
<b>Tinkercad</b> <a href="https://www.tinkercad.com">https://www.tinkercad.com</a>	All kinds of making.
<b>Prodigy Maths</b> <a href="https://www.prodigygame.com">https://www.prodigygame.com</a>	Is in U.S. grades, but good for UK Primary age.
<b>Cbeebies Radio</b> <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio">https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio</a>	Listening activities for the younger ones.
<b>Nature Detectives</b> <a href="https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/">https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/</a>	A lot of these can be done in a garden, or if you can get to a remote forest location!
<b>Oxford Owl for Home</b> <a href="https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/">https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/</a>	Lots of free resources for Primary age
<b>Big History Project</b> <a href="https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home">https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home</a>	Aimed at Secondary age. Multi-disciplinary activities.
<b>Geography Games</b> <a href="https://world-geography-games.com/world.html">https://world-geography-games.com/world.html</a>	Geography gaming!
<b>Blue Peter Badges</b> <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges">https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges</a>	If you have a stamp and a nearby post box.
<b>The Artful Parent</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/artfulparent/">https://www.facebook.com/artfulparent/</a>	Good, free art activities
<b>Red Ted Art</b> <a href="https://www.redtedart.com">https://www.redtedart.com</a>	Easy arts and crafts for little ones
<b>The Imagination Tree</b> <a href="https://theimaginationtree.com">https://theimaginationtree.com</a>	Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.
<b>Toy Theater</b> <a href="https://toytheater.com/">https://toytheater.com/</a>	Educational online games
<b>Twinkl</b> <a href="https://www.twinkl.co.uk">https://www.twinkl.co.uk</a>	This is more for printouts, and usually at a fee, but they are offering a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures.
<b>Virtual tours</b>	<a href="https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours">https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours</a> Virtual tours of some of the world's best museums

## Reference documents:

The World Health Organisation

[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)

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2)

Mental Health UK

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

NEF – Five Ways to Wellbeing: The Evidence

<https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence>

Wang et al (2020) Mitigate the effects of home confinement on children during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Lancet; Correspondence.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30547-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30547-X)

National Association of School Psychologists

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Brooks et al (2020) The Psychological Effects of Quarantine and How to Reduce It: A rapid review of the evidence. In The Lancet Volume 395, ISSUE 10227.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)

The Child Mind Institute

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

Mind Hong Kong

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