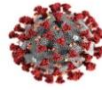


Supporting your child at this time



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

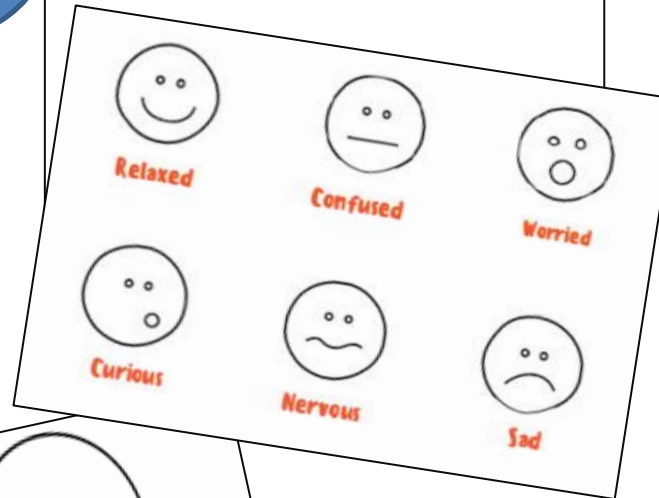
Worried about family

Missing friends

Feeling bored or lonely

Scared that they will get poorly

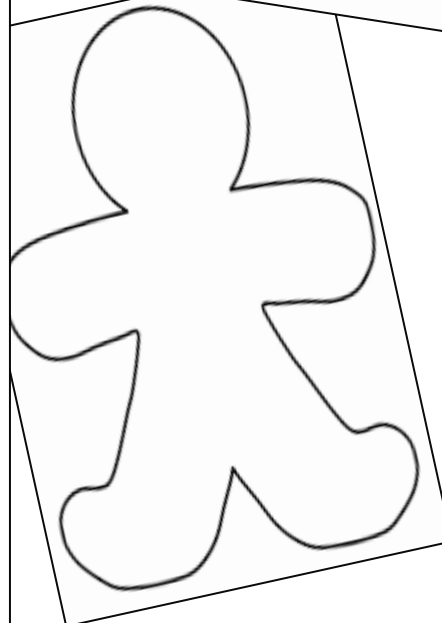
Talk about emotions. It will really help if your child can express how they are feeling. Some of these words might be new to your child so spend some time talking them through. The accompanying booklet, '**My name is Coronavirus**' will have activities for them to explore these emotions further. Perhaps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

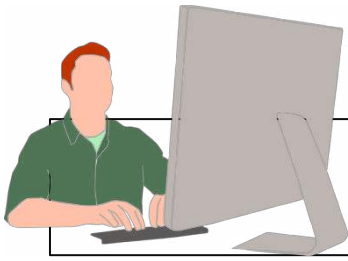
I bet you can't wait to see your friends again

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
- 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
- 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.



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