

Creating a new 'normal' for children at home:

With schools closing, self-isolation and social distancing, we are having to create a new 'normal' for the next few weeks. This is uncharted territory for many of us and we are all learning as we go along. We've put together some ideas to help establish a new 'normal' at home - remember to

CONNECT:

- C**hat to others - and remember to laugh!
- O**pportunities - make the most of this strange time
- N**ew Routines - create a new predictability for children
- N**urture yourselves - make time to recharge
- E**xercise - strengthen immune systems and keep well
- C**reate - let your imaginations grow
- T**ogether-time - keep connected with those near and far



Chat

It is really important to build opportunities in to your day for children to chat openly about how they are feeling and how they are finding things in this strangest of times. Remember many children will be missing their friends from school. Try to find some time in your day when your child has your undivided attention (turn off distractions such as TV, phones, background noise, etc.).

It is easy to feel overwhelmed at this time and many children will need adults to acknowledge how they are feeling and that this is a strange time for everyone. Children are vulnerable to feeling anxious, sad and stressed at this time; they might find it difficult to make sense of what they are seeing on TV and hearing from other people. We may not have all the answers but knowing someone cares and is listening is often just as important when we have something bothering us. Worry jars and worry monsters might help children express their fears (see NEWSolutions Anxiety leaflet).

Remember to have time to chat about silly things too and remember to laugh; it really is a great medicine!



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Opportunities

Although Coronavirus means that many of us are missing out on school, activities, hobbies, holidays, etc., we can look at this time in a more helpful way and think about what opportunities might arise; what are the things we would like to learn or what are some of the things we have not had time to get round to?

Can you think of something you could learn together in this time or is there anything you could teach your children or they could teach you? This is a great opportunity for children to learn some useful life skills (remember to consider their age & ability) such as baking, growing vegetables/flowers, helping with washing, etc. There are so many opportunities to learn in these practical activities and from this extra time you can spend together.



New Routines

Routines help us all feel safe and give us a sense of predictability. Our usual routines have been turned upside down so we need to create new routines in these times. It might even be by starting the day by ensuring beds are made; although it might seem insignificant, it can help to achieve something at the very start of day and appreciate at the end of day.

Bedtime and mealtimes are really important routines at this time; eating healthily and sleeping well matter more than ever to help us to build our immune systems and to keep us feeling well and healthy. It can be easy to lose good sleep and eating routines at a time like this because they might not seem to matter so much but they are still really important. Remember to keep hydrated too.

Some families are benefiting from having daily schedules; these can help us to do set things at set times and help us make sure we are doing different types of activities during the day, including school work. They can also help us look forward to treats (e.g. exercise, TV, family, gaming time).

Timers can be helpful too - you can use a phone with a favourite song coming on to get up and have a dance at the end of a task or activity. Have fun with these - take turns to be in charge of the timer, choosing the song, etc. Movement and brain breaks are important when staying at home.

We will adapt to these new routines with the help from each other.



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Nurture Yourself

It is really important to look after yourselves at this time (children and adults). We will all need to recharge our batteries and we will all do this in a different way. It is important to show children that it is alright to have some alone time if it's needed, especially if you are in a busy house at the moment. Build some time into your new routines for this; it could be listening to music, reading a book, doing some craft, going for a walk or run. Ask your child what is important for them to do to look after themselves and talk about what you will do for yourself too.

Exercise

Exercise is important for our physical and mental wellbeing; think about how you can build this in to your family's new routine (but sticking to the government's guidelines). There are various exercise and dance sessions for all ages being shared online as well as free subscriptions to exercise and wellbeing communities.

Keep moving throughout the day; it can be easy for us all to sit for too long. Movement breaks can help our attention and concentration levels, allowing us to achieve more in a day.

Create

This is an opportunity for us all to find our creative selves, even if we don't think we have one! Children can often find it easier to express themselves in creative ways e.g. through drawing, making, writing, acting, etc. We can often have very supportive conversations with children during creative activities; we can listen well, follow their topics and respond to what they want to talk about. Keeping a journal through this time might also help children and it allows us to look back and see how things have changed (what we are doing and how we are feeling).

Lots of rainbows are appearing in windows - perhaps your family could make some for relatives, neighbours or residents in care homes. We are all having to think creatively to support each other to get through this.



Together-time

It is difficult to be apart from loved ones, especially if we are used to seeing them often. Keep in touch through video chats, messaging, etc. Arrange for your children to video chat with their friends and help them still feel connected to their friendship groups. Remember to have family-time within your household - play games, watch a favourite film, build Lego together and, most importantly, enjoy and treasure these moments together.



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