



Issue 2
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NEWSLetter

*'Gifts are a
Transitional Object.
What they say is "I
haven't forgotten
you. You are still in
my heart. Our
connection stretches
across space". It
isn't the gift that
matters most, but the
love it represents'*

*Suzanne Zeedyk
(2020)*



If you have anything you'd like submitted to the NEWSLetter or if you have any comments or feedback, please email **Pauline** at pauline@new-solutions.co.uk

Welcome to our second NEWSLetter. We hope you enjoyed reading our first issue which focussed on the themes of connection, laughter and feelings of safety.

This week, in **NEWS** from **U** on **Page 2**, a reader has shared their experiences of being young and surviving lockdown. It is fantastic to hear from our readers and we hope to hear from more them in future NEWSLetters.

This week, we have an article on **Page 3** about the impact of coronavirus on young people's mental health. In a survey by YoungMinds on the impact of coronavirus on young people, 83% of respondents reported that the pandemic had made their mental health worse. It is important young people know that they are not alone and there is help available during this time. There is lots that young people can do to keep mentally well and we have 10 handy tips to help the with this.

We will all be feeling a bit stressed right now; children and adults alike. We have an article on **Page 4** about managing stress in positive ways and building resilience in ourselves and our children. See **Page 5** for self-regulation tips and ideas for the whole family on managing big emotions in our children.

On **Page 6** we have an article on the Importance of Play as a healthy coping strategy for children who are dealing with worries about coronavirus. On **Page 7** we have put links to lots of helpful play ideas, including activities for children who may be finding the constraints of indoor living difficult.

Since our last newsletter, Kirstie, one of the NEWSolutions team, has put together some thematic Sharing Ideas leaflets. The first two are about connection and feelings of safety, as featured in our first NEWSLetter. They are titled 'Creating a New Normal' and 'Transitional Objects' – both can be found at <https://www.new-solutions.co.uk/training-support/helpful-information/>.

NEWS from U

Dear Readers,

Like most countries across the globe, coronavirus has really flipped life upside down for British citizens. A mere three weeks ago I was employed as an English teacher in Vietnam, sunbathing on tropical beaches and eating meals for less than £1. Now, I am living at home with my parents, unemployed and skint! The pandemic has really put a spanner in the works and with the majority of businesses closing their doors for the foreseeable future, it is unlikely I will pick up a job anytime soon. It is completely normal to feel frustrated and a little bit lost during these unprecedented times – I know I certainly do! For someone who likes to be busy, I am really struggling to find a sense of purpose. However, getting up early, sticking to a routine and getting out for a decent walk with the dog has really helped.

I am also using my spare time to volunteer at Voluntary Action Angus: a great non-profit organisation helping the vulnerable in our communities. The role involves picking up and delivering shopping and prescriptions to those in self-isolation. Sometimes, it is even just providing a friendly phone call to someone who is feeling lonely. Volunteering is not only a great thing to do; it has helped me achieve a sense of purpose. Instead of sitting at home wallowing in my own self-pity, I am doing something useful and really helping my community when they need it the most.

For anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation, I would highly recommend signing up to be a volunteer. Similarly, if anyone is self-isolating and needs help, then please contact Voluntary Action Angus and they will be able to put you in touch with a volunteer.

Helena, 24



Thank you to our readers who have sent in pictures of activities that reflect to them connection in these times.

Painted pebbles are a great transitional object and a way of feeling connected to loved ones – leaving a pebble on a doorstep with a personal message can be a great way of letting people know you care, and you haven't forgotten them.



If you would like to volunteer for Voluntary Action Angus or you require support due to social isolation, more information can be found at www.voluntaryactionangus.org.uk or by phoning 01307 466113.

Teens, Coronavirus &

Dear Teenagers,

Just a couple of months ago you might have been fretting over friendship issues, studying for exams or thinking about what to do at the weekend.

Now, it probably feels like life has changed in unimaginable ways.

You might actually be enjoying the different pace of life and not having the pressure of exams.

Or, it may feel that your freedoms have been stripped and you are now stuck inside 24/7 with your family (some teenagers worst nightmare)!

Suddenly being cut off from friends and forced to spend time with family, coupled with the uncertainty of what's to come in the following weeks and months may cause you to feel under increasing stress and pressure.

Now is more important than ever to know that you can take steps to look after your own mental health and wellbeing.

Emotional Wellbeing

Top Ten Tips for Teenagers:

1. **Let it out.** If you feel like crying, then go ahead! It's okay to cry and let people know how you're feeling. In fact, it will definitely feel better than hiding your emotions and pretending you're okay when you're not. It's okay not to be okay.
2. **Avoid the news.** It is easy to get obsessed with checking news outlets, but these often focus on negative stories. If you feel the need to stay up-to-date, then limit your time reading articles to once a day (not before bedtime). Make sure that these stories are from credible sources.
3. **Positive feed.** Focus on following social media accounts that make you feel positive and happy. If there's an account making you feel worried or stressed, then consider unfollowing or muting their posts. If social media is still making you feel negative, you should maybe consider taking some time away from it.
4. **Fresh air.** Make the most out of your daily exercise and get out of the house! A nice walk, even if it is just around the block, can really help to clear your mind and put you in a more positive mindset. Even just sitting outside in the garden or near a window can help boost your mood.
5. **Sleep.** A decent quality sleep can be the difference between a good and a bad day. It is easy for sleeping patterns to slip when there's no school to wake up for the next morning! However, try as hard as you can to stick to a routine and get up reasonably early (you could always treat yourself to a lie in at the weekend).
6. **Stay connected.** It is now easier than ever to keep in touch with friends and family! Remember to check in with your loved ones – a chat with a friendly face can do wonders for your mental wellbeing. It is also a good idea to organise a weekly group FaceTime with your friends or organise virtual games nights.
7. **Start a hobby.** Have you always dreamed of playing the violin or going on the Great British Bake Off? Well, there's no better time to teach yourself a new skill! Channeling your energy into something positive will help keep you focused and reduce stress.
8. **Write about it.** Jotting down your thoughts in a journal is a great way to get your feelings out. If you are a budding artist, you can even draw about how you feel.
9. **Organise your day.** Sometimes, even getting out of bed can be a real struggle. Making a to-do list and ticking things off as you go can give you a real sense of accomplishment (remember, it doesn't matter if you don't get everything finished).
10. **Laughter is the best medicine.** Remember, we will get through this and it's okay to laugh and feel happy. Stick on a funny film, perfect your latest TikTok or look through some old photos to give yourself a giggle.

Please check the back of the NEWSLetter for some links to support; you can also check out our NEWSolutions website for further links to support - <https://www.new-solutions.co.uk/training-support/helpful-information/>

Building Resilience from Stress

Life has changed dramatically and in ways that were unimaginable a month ago. There are many more pressures and stresses on families and healthy coping strategies, such as coffee with a friend or a visit to the gym, are currently off limits. This is a new situation that no one has experienced before, and many will feel they have little or no control over what is happening.

Whilst it is impossible to avoid life stressors, having the coping skills to navigate and manage stress is important in the maintenance of good physical and mental wellbeing. As parents and carers, you may be wondering about how to support your children with their stresses and worries, when you have your own and are trying to adapt to a 'new normal' for you and your family.

Bruce Perry, a leading Child Psychiatrist, has studied how individuals manage stress and stay regulated. Perry's research is especially important throughout these times of uncertainty, unpredictability and stress. Stress can be a good thing, but this depends on how we respond to it; if we introduce stress to children in predictable, moderate and controllable ways then we can use stressful situations to build resilience in ourselves and our children.

The Pandemic Toolkit Parents Need is a helpful article produced by Psychology Today with eight expert tips from Perry:

- 1. Structure your day.** Whilst it may seem like life is shifting constantly beneath your feet, routines remain important for children. Children can tolerate stress when it is predictable; regular bedtimes, mealtimes and a daily plan will help to ensure predictability.
- 2. Family meals.** This is a perfect time to check in with your child, talk through any family problems; ensuring that they feel heard and that their views are important. Ensuring where possible that meals are well balanced and nutritious will help the body to manage the physical impact stress can have.
- 3. Limit media.** Technology and social media are great ways to stay connected in this time. However, be wary of fake news stories that are in abundance and can incite feelings of fear or anxiety which children can pick up on. Check reliable news sources and limit the time you check them to a couple of times a day. An over reliance on media can replace time spent with family and learning other ways to manage stress.
- 4. Exercise.** Social distancing doesn't have to stop us getting exercise. Be creative and get active. Stress can make it hard for us to use the thinking part of our brain to problem solve, apply logic and make good choices. Exercise, particularly rhythmic exercise that is repetitive and patterned, can help move an anxious child to a calmer state. Activities like walking, running, dancing, drumming, singing and breathing activities are all good examples.
- 5. Reach out.** Feeling connected to others is one of the most important things to combat stress, especially in current times. Don't be afraid to reach out to others, ask for help and accept help that is on offer. You are modelling to your child that it is okay to ask for help. Additionally, by taking care of your own needs ensures you are more able to meet the needs of your child. A stressed-out child cannot be regulated by a stressed-out parent; it is a neurobiological impossibility.
- 6. Help others.** Where you can, reach out to help others. A simple act of kindness from one person to another can have a profound effect on both parties; releasing endorphins and oxytocin (the feel-good hormones) and reducing levels of stress.
- 7. Good sleep routines.** You may notice that physically and mentally you are tiring quicker. Exercise in the morning or afternoon, relaxing activities, avoiding late eating and not using any screens an hour before bed can help with setting up a good sleep.
- 8. Stay positive.** Staying calm and regulated can help others around us to feel the same. Modelling positive stress management strategies can support others to cope with stress in healthy ways. Finding ways to get regulated again can also help – see the next page for ideas.

Go to <https://www.new-solutions.co.uk/training-support/helpful-information/> and check out our 'Creating a New Normal for Children at Home' Sharing Ideas Leaflet for more ideas to CONNECT and build a 'New Normal' in these unprecedented times.



Helping Children Manage Big Feelings

"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not to join their chaos."
(L.R. Knost)



None of us came into the world knowing how to control big feelings and it is something we all need to learn. Often children don't have the language or the words to name or explain how they are feeling or what it is they want. In these times, our children may become overwhelmed by big feelings and we might see meltdowns, outbursts or tantrums. Some children might bottle their feelings up and become sad or withdrawn.

Children generally have a harder time with self-regulation because their brains are still developing and the area responsible for problem solving, logic and decision making is underdeveloped. Think of a two-year-old in a supermarket having a tantrum because they aren't getting something they want; this is because they are overwhelmed by a big feeling and they have not learnt the skills to manage this in helpful ways yet. It would be less likely to see a 14-year-old behaving like this. Having developed self-regulation skills, they have learnt other ways to manage their emotions.

If we think of these behaviours as a way of communication, and we can help children to find ways to manage their feelings and behaviours in difficult situations, then we are helping them with the skills of self-regulation. When children are able to regulate their emotional responses, they become less vulnerable to the ongoing impact of stress. This is important at any time but particularly in the current climate.

Practicing deep breathing is a great way to support children or adults alike to self-regulate. Deep breathing means that we are breathing from our belly and not from our chest. The aim of deep breathing is to bring the body back to a calm, relaxed state. It is important to practice deep breathing exercises daily at a quiet time and when their bodies are calm; this allows the child to really concentrate and focus on their breathing. Let children know that you are practicing this to help their bodies to feel calm and relaxed. There are lots of breathing activities you can try with your child including blowing bubbles and the Triangle Breathing Exercise, which features in the 'Coping Skills for Kids' article (details of this and a list of helpful websites can be found on page 7).

'Name it to Tame it' – Help your child to tell their story about what is upsetting them. For younger ones, you might have to name what you see – 'wow, you're really frustrated just now because you can't have chocolate', 'you're really sad you can't go out in the garden'. For older children it can be helpful to acknowledge their feelings – 'I don't blame you for feeling upset, I'd feel upset too'. Regardless of the age of the child, this can be very effective. What this conveys to your child is that you understand how they are feeling. Even if you don't agree with their behaviour, focussing on how they feel and acknowledging this can help to deepen your relationship and lets your child know that their feelings are important. You can then problem solve together about a new way of doing things.

Modelling how to manage difficult or overwhelming experiences is a good way for children to learn self-regulation. For example, if they know that it is okay to make mistakes and that no one is perfect, then this becomes a good opportunity for growth and development. If we are forgiving and responsible in our attitudes to making mistakes, then children will be more likely to manage big feelings when they make mistakes in life.

The Importance of Play

**"Whoever
wants to
understand
much must
play much."**

(Gottfried Benn)



**"Children
need the
freedom
and time
to play.
Play is
not a
luxury.
Play is a
necessity."**

(Kay Redfield Jamison)

A couple of articles over the last few weeks have really caught my eye. These have been about the importance of play for children as a healthy coping strategy for dealing with worries about coronavirus. Having previously supported children and families with play, I have always considered this is more than merely a fun thing for children to do - play is necessary, play is child's work, play is a child's language where they might not have words and play is where children learn about themselves and the world around them.

Play "embraces children's total experience. They use it to tell their stories; to be funny and silly; to challenge the world; to imitate it; to engage with it, to discover and understand it, and to be social. They also use play to explore their inmost feelings." (Jenkinson (2005), as cited in Play Scotland)

Therefore, if we consider that play can help children tell their story, make sense of their world and use it to explore their own feelings, then in the coronavirus epidemic opportunities for children to play should be encouraged.

An article in *The Conversation* highlights that in uncertain times, anxiety heightens for both adults and children. The article discusses home-schooling and how in normal circumstances, this would be planned and a free decision that parents have made to teach their children at home. The coronavirus pandemic is not a normal circumstance and trying to home-school children whilst working from home and dealing with your own worries and stresses can feel like added pressure.

The power of play for children and the positive impact on the whole family, providing lots of opportunities for children to play, may be of extreme benefit. Free play is particularly useful, especially for primary aged children. During free play, children are in the driving seat: they decide what to play, how to play and when to start and stop. Free play supports learning and can improve physical and mental health as it can decrease stress levels and provide healthy ways for children to make sense of what is happening. It can also provide parents with clues as to how their child may be feeling.

Free play also gives children a sense of control and independence which is very important at a time when they may feel that they have little or no control over what is happening around them. Adults can support free play by providing the space and things children need; this can include providing materials for messy play or collecting recyclable materials for junk building. Parents should only join in if the child asks them to play. If your child, whilst playing is incorporating coronavirus or themes of illness or death into their play, don't worry about this and try not to intervene; acting out play scenarios help's your child express their deepest worries and process emotions, ask questions and make sense of their world. Importantly, through play children can practice creative problem solving and alter their narrative, changing the outcome of a scary situation.

(Please see Page 7 for lots of links to activities and ideas for play).

Links & Helpful Information

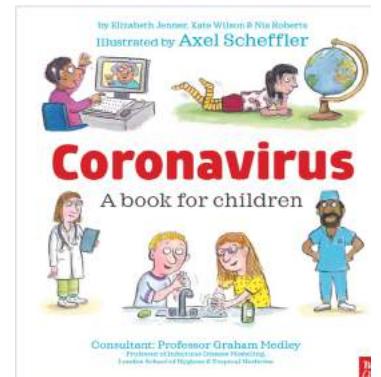
Here you will find links to articles and links related to topics in the NEWSLetter. There are also links to helpful information from other organisations.

Check out our Helpful Information page at <https://www.new-solutions.co.uk/training-support/helpful-information/>; we have a list of helpful websites and information related to mental health and wellbeing with sections for children, young people and parents.

Below are some further sources of information that may be of interest.

Story Books

Nosy Crow in collaboration with Axel Scheffler, the brilliant illustrator of children's stories including the Gruffalo, has produced a story book for children about coronavirus - <https://nosycrow.com/blog/released-today-free-information-book-explaining-coronavirus-children-illustrated-gruffalo-illustrator-axel-scheffler/>



Teens, Coronavirus & Mental Wellbeing

5 ways to help teens manage anxiety - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html>

SAMH has lots of information and advice for young people - <https://www.samh.org.uk/get-involved/going-to-be/information-help/children-and-young-people>

Importance of Play

The Atlantic article - <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/04/coronavirus-tag-and-other-games-kids-play-during-a-pandemic/609253/>

The Conversation article - <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-just-letting-children-play-will-help-them-and-their-parents-cope-134480>

There are lots of brilliant resources online with ideas for play indoors; many of these have active play ideas, particularly useful for children who need to be on the move and who may be finding the lack of physical activity hard - see links below.

Play Scotland <https://www.playscotland.org>

Hello Wonderful <https://www.hellowonderful.co/post/easy-indoor-activities-for-kids/>

Hand on as we Grow <https://handsonaswegrow.com>

Adventure in a Box <https://www.adventure-in-a-box.com>

Helping Kids Manage Big Feelings

An interesting article from Hey Sigmund - Dealing with Big Feelings - <https://www.heysigmund.com/how-to-self-regulate/>

Deep Breathing Activities for Kids - <https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>

Books - No-Drama Discipline and The Whole Brain Child by Dan Siegel & Tina Bryson - both can be found at https://www.drdansiegel.com/books_and_more/

The Pandemic Toolkit Parents Need - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pulling-through/202004/the-pandemic-toolkit-parents-need>

The most powerful buffer in times of stress and distress is our social connectedness; so, let's all remember to stay physically distant but emotionally close. Reach out and connect; even a short text or smiling face on Zoom can help - Regulate, Relate, Reason (Bruce Perry, 17.03.20).

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