



SUPPORTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

SUPPORTING BEHAVIOUR

Feeling stressed or overwhelmed during COVID-19 is a normal, natural response to this very unusual situation. Stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection on your parenting or suggest that you are weak or not coping appropriately. Below are some messages which may support some of the "learning at home". We are now a number of weeks into lockdown and this can take its toll. Perhaps some of your child's behaviour has seemed to have regressed. This can be a normal response to stress and uncertainty. If this is happening try and connect with your child and provide them with reassurance. Although it is tempting, try not to tell them off for this as they are communicating they are needing your help. It is best to try and support them rather than give them a row. Anxiety can seem almost contagious and spread quickly. But, so can calmness. Giving across a message of calm will be important in supporting your children, and in supporting yourself. It might be worth asking your child questions like the ones below which focus on positive feelings.

Can you think of anything fun we can do at home today?

What have you enjoyed about today?

What have you done today that you are proud of?

What is something you could do for someone else today?

How can you keep in touch with friends and families at the moment?

What has made you feel calm today?

WHEN DISCUSSING COVID 19 WITH YOUR CHILDREN THE FOLLOWING POINTS MAY HELP

INFORM

Provide clear, age appropriate information and reassure. Be led by what your child talks about. Talking will help reduce anxiety.

CONNECT

Encourage talking to friends and family through technology. Connection supports positive wellbeing.

SOOTHE

Spend time doing fun and positive activities together, laugh, sing, dance, try out relaxation and breathing exercises together.

CONTROL

Focus on what you and your child can do like handwashing, eating well, exercise, learning a new skill.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Help your child to name their feelings e.g. I can see you are worried/angry/sad and it's ok to feel like that right now. How can we make you feel better?



SELF CARE FOR PARENTS

Although the thought of trying to fit in self-care can seem laughable when you have lots of things to do, it is really important to try and fit in some downtime for yourself. Worrying and stress can build up, when you have some time to yourself, this allows everything to seem a bit more manageable. Caring for others can deplete your resources but when you prioritise your needs, you will allow yourself to be emotionally and physically in a better space, allowing you to comfort and care for others more successfully. Self care looks different for everyone so try to work out what you can manage.

BE REALISTIC

Avoid burnout by setting realistic expectations and letting yourself off if you don't meet them. There is no rulebook for how you manage this situation and need to remember you are doing your best.

LIMIT NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

Take care with the amount of news and information you are looking at. Check up to date advice from the NHS website or the government website. If friends / family are sharing negative stories try and set boundaries to prevent this affecting you.

KEEP ACTIVE/HEALTHY

Try to eat properly, get enough sleep and get some exercise if possible. Exercise produces chemicals which help our mood and therefore can really help in this situation. Even ensuring you get some natural light beside a window can be beneficial.

TAKE A BREAK

If a day hasn't gone to plan be kind to yourself and start the next day afresh. Try and spend some time alone if at all possible. Being inside can be very intense and this may allow you to regroup and feel calm again.

CONNECT

with people you may normally see. This could be through video calls, phone calls, messaging or letters. Connecting with others may help feelings of isolation.

RELAXATION ACTIVITIES

Sensory Activities



Sit or lie in a comfortable position.

Focus on what is around you and how your body feels. You and your child each take a turn at describing in as much detail as possible:

- what you can see around you
- what noises you can hear (both inside and outside the house)
- what smells you are aware of
- what you can feel (heart beating, soft cushions, hard floor, cool breeze etc)
- take a bite of your favourite treat (e.g. chocolate) or from memory and describe the taste and texture as it melts or you chew it in your mouth.

Rainbow Breathing



1. Place your finger at the bottom of the rainbow.
2. Breathe in through your nose and trace the red arc until you reach the top.
3. When you reach the top, begin to exhale through your mouth and continue tracing.
4. Repeat with each color or until you feel calm and grounded.



Body Scan

The internet has lots of videos and audio guides of resources like the Body Scan. This can be a nice activity to sit and complete as a family. Kids usually enjoy this activity as much as the adults and it teaches them how to relax and pay attention to their body and responses.



TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Don't put too much pressure on yourself. Charities and organisations are telling us that parents are becoming stressed trying to ensure that school work gets done. The priority at home is to care for and support your child and take care of both of your mental health. Please make this a priority over any learning - this can be caught up at a later date.

For some more suggestions have a look at some of the resources below:
 Glasgow Psychological Services Twitter account for helpful suggestions (QR code below)
 The Parenting Club website has some nice resources available at parentclub.scot/coronavirus
 If you are feeling stressed try contacting Parentline for some support: 08000 28 22 23

