Helping Children and Young People Manage in Unsettling Times

There has been a lot of coverage in the media and social media about the Coronavirus and it is easy to feel overwhelmed by this. It is understandable that children and young people are feeling anxious too. They might find it difficult to understand what they are seeing and hearing about the Coronavirus and so they can be particularly vulnerable to feelings of stress, anxiety and sadness.

Alongside educational establishments, parents can help provide opportunities where feelings can be discussed within a safe context, as well as maintaining a sense of normality, routine and calm. Supporting children and young people in this way will help them to process and manage their feelings and build resilience. Suggestions to help:

1. **Ask open questions and listen.** Find out how much your child already knows and follow their lead. If your child is young and has not heard about the outbreak you may not need to raise the issue.

2. **Offer reassurance.** Children may not distinguish between the images they see on TV/social media and their own personal reality. Reassure your child that adults are there to keep them safe.

3. **Be honest.** Give information at an appropriate level for your child's understanding. Watch their reactions and be sensitive to their level of anxiety. Adults have a responsibility to keep children safe from distress.

4. **Provide opportunities for children and young people to be honest about their feelings.** Sharing worries or feelings of upset with other family members will help reduce a sense of vulnerability and isolation and raise optimism. Acknowledge your child's feelings and let them know that it is natural to be worried or scared. Give your child your full attention and make sure that they know that they can speak to you whenever they like.

5. **Help your child to cope with stress by making opportunities for them to play and relax.**

6. **Maintain a normal routine.** Set up a work/leisure/exercise routine for your child at home. Make extra time to listen to what your child needs to tell you.

7. **Place an emphasis on resilience and strengths.** Focus on your child's skills, in terms of their daily life. Help them see they have many strengths to help them cope if feeling anxious or upset.

8 **Share positive stories of people helping each other with Acts of Kindness and generosity.** This can be a big comfort and can help to restore positivity about the world.

9. **Provide opportunities for physical exercise.** Exercise is valuable in producing natural chemicals in the brain to help us cope with feelings such as shock or worry.

10 **Communicate any concerns with your child's educational establishment.** If you have any worries or concerns about your child's emotional wellbeing please do let the establishment know.

11 **Look after yourself.** You will be able to help your child better if you are coping too. Children will pick up on your response, so it helps them to know that you are calm and in control. So please take care of yourself and reach out to friends, family or other trusted adults if you are feeling anxious or upset.

Other useful information can be found on @RenfrewshireEPS

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