

Coronavirus COVID-19

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Coronavirus: Advice for Parents and Carers

Swansea Educational Psychology Service has put together some advice and guidance for parents and carers about how to support the wellbeing and learning of their children during the coronavirus outbreak.

Our Top 10 Tips

1. **Self-care** – look after your own wellbeing and mental health first. Children pick up quickly on their parent's mood so if you are feeling stressed it is more likely your child will be feeling stressed too.
2. **Have fun** – don't feel under pressure to recreate the classroom at home. Take this time to play and have fun with your child - make a den, bake, build, do a puzzle, cuddle up with a film or book, do arts and crafts – try to make the most of this opportunity to spend time together.
3. **Take time to talk** – it is important to talk to children and young people about the Coronavirus outbreak so that they don't imagine the worst and become overly anxious.
4. **Connect** – although we need to keep physically distant from others, we can still help children to connect with others socially through social media such as email, phone and apps like Zoom, What's App, FaceTime and Google Hangouts.
5. **Switch off** – set limits around the use of social media, the news and screens. Try to limit how much time you and your child spend looking at the news/social media as this can increase anxiety. Make time each day to switch off from screens, especially in the evening, as too much screen-time can lead to poor sleep.
6. **Routine** – try to keep to a familiar routine or schedule each day as this helps children to feel stable and secure.
7. **Keep active** – a healthy body supports a healthy mind! Try to build physical activity into each day for you and your child e.g. go for a walk or bike ride, play a game in the garden, do an online PE or Yoga lesson such as Cosmic Kids Yoga or PE with Joe Wicks (both on YouTube).
8. **Stay positive** – try to focus on the positives and the things that you and your child can do to help others, for example, spend some time each day helping

your child to think of things they are grateful for, or think of ways in which you could help others.

9. **Reading, Writing and Maths** – doing a little bit of this every day will help your child to maintain and develop their skills in these areas so that they haven't forgotten them when they return to school.
10. **Ask for help / keep in touch** – it is important to keep in regular contact with your child's school and to ask for help if you are experiencing difficulties at home.

SELF-CARE: LOOKING AFTER YOUR OWN WELLBEING

As parents/carers, it is important to recognise your own feelings and needs in response to this challenging and uncertain time. You may find yourself in new and unexpected situations, like trying to juggle child-care, home-schooling and your own work. It's important that you look after your own mental health:

- Remember that everyone responds differently to significant events, so remind yourself that how you are feeling is normal and OK.
- Try not to put too much pressure on yourself – remember that you are trying to adapt to a challenging situation.
- Think about how news/social media updates make you feel - it may be better to limit this and plan to check for updates a few times a day. Be mindful of where information comes from, some sources are not always trustworthy.
- Take breaks and plan in times to relax and do something you enjoy.
- Take regular exercise. Look online for tips - there are many exercise videos and apps online.
- Have fun together – set up regular family times to play games, have film nights, exercise together, etc.
- Connect with friends and family using social media (e.g. using WhatsApp, Skype, Facetime, Zoom etc.) Connecting with others can remind us that we have support, reassure us that loved ones are safe, as well as giving us time to talk.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.

For further information and ideas:

- Mind UK: Coronavirus and your wellbeing
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

- ZerotoThree: Young Children at Home during the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Importance of Self-Care: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3262-young-children-at-home-during-the-covid-19-outbreak-the-importance-of-self-care>
- Mindkit: 5 ways to wellbeing: <https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>
- Headspace: Mindfulness and Guided Meditations (currently has a free trial): <https://www.headspace.com/>
- Adams Psychology: Coping, Resilience and Wellbeing <http://www.adamspsychologyservices.co.uk/coronavirus.html>

KEEPING ACTIVE

Try and build physical activity into each day – a healthy body supports a healthy mind!

The following listing has a range of activities from various instructors and organisations to keep you and your families active. Hopefully this can support towards improving your physical and mental health. Staying active during these difficult times is important for your body, mind and spirit.

Activities	Link
Close to 6 million views for Joe Wicks first online live PE lesson on YouTube. Streaming every weekday at 9.00am, it's a great way to get you moving and ready to start your day. Give it a go with your families!	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ
Dance with Oti Mabuse live daily at 11:30am. Fun exercise themed around Disney characters. Great for children!	https://www.youtube.com/user/mosetsanagape
Free live online Zumba classes with Sibufit at 7:00pm every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.	Visit the following URL: https://us04web.zoom.us/j/974757231 Or download the 'Zoom Cloud Meetings' App & Join a meeting using 974757231 **Please ensure your microphone is switched off for the smooth running of class**
Sport England have gathered together lots of Stay in, Work out free ideas on how to exercise at home and outdoors. With ideas for young children, families, older adults and people with disabilities or a long-term health condition. It's a brilliant way to try something new. Things to look out for include Disney dance-along, sitting activities and parasport activities.	https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout
If you want to learn to ride a bike to keep fit, then British Cycling's Ready Set Ride daily activity calendar is for you. They are sharing a new game or activity every day and their website has videos and a guide to get you ready to teach your kids to ride a bike.	https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/getinvolved/article/20200325-getinvolved-Getting-the-most-out-of-HSBC-UK-Ready-Set-Rid-0
NHS 10 Minute Home Cardio Workout. Burn calories, lose weight and feel great with this 10-minute home cardio workout routine for aerobic fitness.	https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-home-cardio-workout/

NHS 10 Minute Home Cardio Workout. Burn calories, lose weight and feel great with this 10-minute home cardio workout routine for aerobic fitness.	https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-home-cardio-workout/
Improve your mental wellbeing. Explains how to improve and maintain your mental wellbeing, whether you have a diagnosis of a mental health condition or not.	https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/wellbeing/wellbeing/
30 Minute fat burning home workout by the Body Project. Ideal for beginners, achievable with low impact results.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gC_L9qAHVJ8

30 Minute No-Equipment Cardio Kickboxing Workout by POPSUGAR Fitness	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oLq5fFe5ww
Join Gower Riders CC at 5:30pm for a daily Virtual Cycling Training Session.	Visit the following URL: us04web.zoom.us/j/534720834 Or download the 'Zoom Cloud Meetings' App & Join a meeting using 534720834
Chair based exercise with coach Jaz from Valleys Gymnastics Academy.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96tNVDjOZK4&app=desktop
Visit Newport Live - Happy and Healthy at Home Programme. Lots of online resources and information available that will help you to stay fit and healthy, support positive physical and mental wellbeing and inspire creativity whilst at home.	https://www.newportlive.co.uk/sport-leisure/happy-and-healthy-at-home
Visit Sport Cardiff on Twitter for Family Fun at Home Series. Showing you games all the family can play. Keep a look out for more new games!	https://twitter.com/SportCardiff
Practise mindfulness or meditation - these exercises have been proven to help with anxiety and there are a number of apps such as Headspace and Calm which guides you to daily mindfulness practices.	https://www.headspace.com/ https://www.calm.com/?from=
The Swansea Wellbeing Centre is offering free telephone consultations and on-line support for the amazing frontline health care professionals and support workers in this crisis. With early morning free meditations to prepare you for the day, lunch break mini relaxation sessions to provide a space for mental clarity and a moment of ease during the challenges of your day. Free/donation evening classes to unwind and promote recovery and rest.	https://us17.campaign-archive.com/?u=7c17923b19afc6e4b8f12ed21&id=0e588dab01

TAKE TIME TO TALK

There is currently a lot of worry and uncertainty around the coronavirus outbreak and children and young people will be affected by the changes going on around them, regardless of their age or additional needs. It is important that adults explain what is happening in age appropriate language that they can understand. Here are some resources that might help.

Talking to Children About Coronavirus and Anxiety

The British Psychological Society: Talking to your Children about Coronavirus:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/talking-children-about-coronavirus>

Young Minds: Talking about the Coronavirus: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

World Health Organisation: Information for Parents and Carers to Share:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2

Government guidance on supporting children's mental health and wellbeing -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#children-and-young-people-who-are-accessing-mental-health-services>

Childmind: Video on how to talk to kids about Coronavirus:

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Mental Health Foundation: Talking to children about scary world news:
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/talking-to-your-children-scary-world-news.pdf>

Stories and Information about Coronavirus

For younger children

1. ELSA: Coronavirus Story for Children: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/> 2
2. Mindheart: A short story about Coronavirus for young children, aged 7 and under, available in different languages: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
3. Little Puddins Social Story: <https://littlepuddins.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>
4. NHS Factsheet - <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5093>

For older children and young adults (with additional needs)

1. Carol Gray Social Story about Pandemics and Coronavirus: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>
2. MENCAP: Explaining the Coronavirus: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Info%20about%20covid19%2026th%20March.pdf>

Media for children and young people about coronavirus

Cartoon about Coronavirus

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

World Health Organisations Information video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOV1aBVYKGA&feature=youtu.be>

CBBC Newsround: Coronavirus Video Series: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround#more-stories-2>

HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO MANAGE ANXIETY

As the situation is changing and uncertain, it may be that some (but not necessarily all) children and young people feel anxious. It can be helpful to recognise and validate anxious feelings and then think of ways to help. Below are some links resources that aim to build resilience and strategies for reducing anxiety in children.

For younger children

1. Explanation of Anxiety, 'The Guard Dog and the Owl': Cosmic Kids Zen Den (Primary): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8>
2. Puppy Mind: A Story to Help Young Children Manage their Thoughts <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xd7Cr265zgc>

3. Be the Pond: A Short Meditation for Young Children to Help Manage Emotions by Cosmic Kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf5K3pP2IUQ>
4. Save the Children: Relaxation exercises to do at home - <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/coronavirus/resources/learning-at-home#coronavirus>
5. Headspace for Kids - <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>

For older children

1. Young Minds: What to do if you are worried about Coronavirus: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>
2. MIND: Coronavirus and your wellbeing <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>
3. The Anna Freud: a list of self-care activities: <https://www.annafreud.org/selfcare/>
4. Worry and OCD: Coronavirus survival tips: <https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-survival-tips/>
5. Free Mindfulness Resources from Calm: <https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath>

BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF

As the coronavirus outbreak continues it is likely that some families will have to cope with bereavement and feelings of grief and loss. Or even if your family is not directly affected, it might be that feelings of grief and loss are still stirred up, or perhaps bring to the forefront previous experiences of bereavement. This is normal but can be a challenging time for many families. If you would like more help supporting your child to cope with bereavement see the following:

Winston's Wish: Information and helpline <https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Child Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

Child Bereavement Uk: Video on Supporting Children
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>

Cruse, Coronavirus: Dealing with Bereavement and Grief: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

SETTING UP ROUTINES AND STRUCTURE

Familiar routines can help us all feel more secure as they help us know what to expect and prepare for.

Keep it simple - you could just have a couple of key activities that will happen at about the same time each day (e.g. playing a game together, story time/reading etc).

Some children can find change very unsettling and will benefit from a more structured timetable at home.

You may want to keep it open (e.g. “learning time” not “reading” etc) to give you some flexibility, for example:

8:00	breakfast	2:00	learning time
9:00	exercise	3:00	life skills
10:00	shower / hygiene	4:00	tech time
11:00	learning time	5:00	dinner
12:00	lunch	6:00	quiet activity
1:00	free time	7:00	bedtime

Breezy Special Ed

You could try setting alarms to mark key time points in your daily routine.

For younger children, use songs for key time points (brushing teeth, lunch time, tidy up time etc – you could look on YouTube for ideas)

Remember not to put too much pressure on yourself or your family!

You can set up a simple routine to see if it helps, but don't worry if you don't always stick to it!

If you are struggling to think of different activities to fill the day then check out this activity menu by Dr Dawn Bradley

https://2950c04d-206b-4c18-b42f-9cec21f46c7d.filesusr.com/ugd/ec3214_b557c2d1086f40438da7af49cc02ab58.pdf

WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD AT HOME: READING, WRITING AND MATHS

Trying to support your child to learn at home can be difficult. Use the resources school have provided to you, especially if your child is familiar with them. If you need more resources, contact your child's school and they will be able to help. Trying to do a little bit of reading, writing and maths with your child everyday will help them to maintain the skills they have been learning in school.

PAIRED READING:

Paired Reading is a technique that parents can use to support school-age children with their reading at home. It is completed daily, for 5-15 minutes. It has 2 main steps:

Step 1 - Reading Together

Read the text together out loud, at a steady pace, following your child's speed of reading. If your child gets stuck on a word for longer than 3-4 seconds, pronounce the word clearly for him/her, then continue reading as before. Don't worry about 'sounding out' the word. Praise your child if they are able to read a tricky word correctly.

Step 2 - Reading Alone

If your child is confident enough, move to this step. There are two methods;

- Gradually lower the volume of your voice, so that your child is reading on their own, or
- Agree a signal to be quiet (e.g. a knock, sign or squeeze). If the child makes this signal, you should stop reading and allow them to read on their own.
- If your child struggles for 3-4 seconds, then say the correct word and get your child to repeat it but don't worry about 'sounding out' the word.

For more information on Paired Reading - <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guides/Reading-and-Dyslexia/Reading-and-Dyslexia-Shared-Paired-Reading-At-Home.pdf>

Writing:

Writing is hard for many children, so now may be a good time to give your child practice.

For children who are developing their early handwriting skills:

- Refer to the Evelina Resource Pack, a pack created by Occupational Therapists (OTs; <https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/occupational-therapy-school-age-resource-pack.pdf>). This will provide many activities and ideas to work on.

For children who want to improve their writing:

- Give them opportunities to practice free-flow writing, without time or content restrictions. For example, a project around an area of interest is a good idea, as it supports your child to develop writing fluency.

For children (late primary/secondary aged) who find writing difficult:

- Now may be a good time to practice using IT supports, such as touch-typing. Tutorials are available for free and can be found on websites such as BBC bitesize (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr>).
- Give your child opportunities to present their work in creative ways (e.g. mind maps, comic strips, posters), so they can develop confidence in their own ideas.

Further resources

There are many learning resources available online, which will be useful when working with your child at home. Remember that your child's school is the best place to seek resources from. Be careful not to set expectations that are too high, agree daily achievable targets and ensure both you and your child have relaxation time. Many of these resources have been made available for free, here are some examples;

Resource	Link
BBC Bitesize continues to provide resources, which are being adapted for home learning.	https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
Audible are an audiobook company (run by Amazon) who are providing free audiobooks while schools are closed in the UK. This will support your child to develop a love for reading and reading comprehension skills.	https://stories.audible.com/start-listen
ChatterPack is a resource page for children with learning needs. They have created a resource list, suitable for all ages with many subjects of learning.	https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/resources-list-for-home-learning
Twinkl Home Learning Hub is a website providing resources for teachers (offering a month free to parents)	https://www.twinkl.co.uk/home-learning-hub
International Children's Digital Library (ICDL) is a non-profit organisation that provides books from different cultures and in different languages:	http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/
Ted Ed All sorts of engaging educational videos	https://ed.ted.com
National Geographic Kids: Activities and quizzes for primary age children	https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/
Mystery Science Free science lessons	https://mysteryscience.com
The Kids Should See This: Wide range of cool educational videos	https://thekidshouldseethis.com
The Hungry Little Minds website has lots of lovely ideas for supporting the learning and development of children aged 0-5	https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/
Futurelearn: Free to access 100s of short courses. Mainly for older children and young people of college age. Only pay to upgrade if you need a certificate in your name (own account from age 14+ but younger learners can use a parent account).	https://www.futurelearn.com
Seneca: For those revising at GCSE or A level. Pages of free revision content. Paid access to higher level material.	https://www.senecalearning.com




Keeping in touch:

If you have any concerns it is important to keep in touch with your child's school. All schools should have a member of staff answering phone calls, so they should not be difficult to contact.

The current period of uncertainty has been difficult for both schools and parents, so although they may not be able to provide instant answers, maintaining a dialogue is important so that schools can build the support they offer.

Organisation	Link
Contact – free helpline and website for families.	Phone: 0808 808 3555 www.contact.org.uk
Mind UK – charity supporting mental health.	www.mind.org.uk
Family Action – free helpline for families	Phone: 0808 802 6666
Kooth – counselling app for young people	www.kooth.com
The Samaritans	Phone: 116 123
Young Minds Parents Helpline	https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline/
National Autistic Helpline	https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/main.aspx

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