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Coronavirus

Supporting emotional wellbeing for children and families

In this unprecedented time, we are going to experience a range of emotions, sometimes confusion, numbness or even no clearly identifiable feelings. This is all normal. There are some key things that we can do to look after our emotional health.

BE ACCESSIBLE

Talk to your children and answer their questions. Ask about what they have heard about the virus and the situation. Allow them to ask questions so that you can correct possible misconceptions and reassure them.

Give them the space to ask these questions. There are no wrong or silly questions.

Remember your child's age. Give them factual information but adjust the amount and detail to fit their age. For example, you might say 'we don't yet have a vaccination for Coronavirus, but doctors are working very hard on it' or 'a lot of people might get sick, but normally it is like a cold or flu and they get better'.

Younger children might understand a cartoon or picture better than an explanation.

It is ok to say you don't know - at the moment, there are questions we don't have answers to about Coronavirus.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Avoid being too immersed in media coverage. Be mindful of the amount and the content of the things you are reading and watching, including social media – as this may add to worry and anxiety. Consider a few updates every day from trusted sources.

Take care of yourself. Make sure you have breaks, time to relax, and ask for help from others if you need, whether at home or in school. If you are at home, music, breathing and relaxation exercises, distraction (such as watching something funny), pets and exercise can all help. Talk to your children when you feel calm – it will reassure them.

AS A FAMILY

As the school's close make sure that you have **structure** to your day at home. But please do not feel that you need to replicate a full school day. Most parents and carers aren't teachers and so it's OK not to be doing 'school work' for six hours a day.

Keep to routines (e.g. time for learning, lunch time, break times). Children respond better to routine and stability. It will be helpful to involve children in creating this routine, so that they feel part of the plan, rather than the plan being imposed on them. You could display the routine using a timeline, or maybe pictures and visuals. Encourage children to develop independence by referring to their own routine/plan themselves.

Do not worry if the routine isn't perfect – Remember, this is not a normal situation.

It would be helpful to keep school work in one place or area of the house. This can help to maintain a work/home boundary.

If your child seems worried, it may be good to distract them with something that takes their mind off their worries. You might also want to set aside 10-15 minutes each day for them to talk about any worries, and to reassure them.

Remember to keep things positive and give children hope. For example, tell children that now many people are working to make this better and that even though it is serious, everyone is doing their best to help people.

Do nice things together and keep active. Make a timetable/plan of when family time and nice things will happen, for example, playing games, cooking, exercise or do other things that you know most of you like.

Try to find a good balance between time together and screen time. Try not to worry too much if your rules for screen time become relaxed, although do ensure parental controls are on electronic devices and that you can supervise (as best as possible) screen time.

Keep in good contact with family and friends (via Facetime, Skype WhatsApp etc-following NHS guidance on 'social contact'). This will help children connect with others and know that others are thinking about them. It will also reassure them that others are well.

If you have any worries or concerns about your child's emotions/behaviour please do let the school know, even if they are closed. There will be plans to make senior staff available to liaise with parents. They can give you advice or signpost you to services to contact. Or you can contact the Educational Psychology Service on 0208 583 4188.

Some useful links:

NHS Advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

The British Psychological Society Advice:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Talking%20to%20children%20about%20coronavirus.pdf>

How to talk to your child about coronavirus, by Unicef:

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

Child-friendly explanation of Coronavirus for Primary age students:

https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf

Information video on Coronavirus for Primary age children (KS2), by Brainpop:
<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

Information video on Coronavirus for older children/adults, by WHO:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOV1aBVYKGA&feature=youtu.be>

Anxiety and world news
<https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-in-children-after-world-trauma/>

Talking about world trauma with kids
<https://www.heysigmund.com/how-to-talk-to-kids-and-teens-about-world-trauma/>

Managing anxiety age by age
<https://www.heysigmund.com/age-by-age-guide-to-fears/>

<https://gozen.com/allprograms/>

Mindfulness for kids
Smiling Mind <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

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

5 ways to wellbeing, by Mindkit:
<https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Note: as the situation and sources of information are developing, the above tips and links may be updated.