

Educational Psychology Service

Coronavirus - supporting children's wellbeing

COVID-19 brings with it, new challenges, for all. It is important to remember that during these unprecedented times, many children and young people will be scared and anxious. Despite our best efforts, children see and hear lots, if not in the news, then perhaps by picking up on the worries and anxieties of others around them. Your child may react to uncomfortable feelings and thoughts by changing their behaviours and demonstrating behaviours you have not seen from them before. Try to remember this is a natural response.

Key Points

- Stress and anxiety in such an unusual and unpredictable situation, is normal.
- Children can sometimes believe that they are responsible for events that are beyond their control – reassure them that it is the adults' job to keep them safe.
- Friendships are key to maintaining resilience for children, so help them to maintain these relationships through phone calls, online communication, and writing letters.
- Try to avoid arguments and confrontation. Instead have a cuddle, watch a film, share a book, play board games, build dens. Model kindness.
- Play is fundamental to the wellbeing and development of children of all ages, and a great way to reduce stress in adults¹

Do	Don't
Allow children to ask questions: It is natural that children will have questions and worries about Coronavirus. Give them the space to ask these questions and having answers is a good way to ease anxiety ² Consider your children's age and level of understanding when answering questions. Tailor conversations to their emotional level.	Don't make up answers – it is ok to say you don't know. There are many questions we don't have the answer to right now.

¹ <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-offers-advice-schools-parents-and-carers-help-children-through-uncertainty>

² <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus>

<p>Ask what they have heard about the virus and the situation so that you can correct possible misconceptions and reassure them. Try to give a balanced view and focus on the stories of people who have overcome coronavirus and the people who are keeping us safe.</p> <p>Remember to keep things positive and give children hope. For example, tell your children there are many people working to make things better.</p>	<p>Don't sensationalise and give worst case scenarios.</p>
<p>Be mindful of the things you are reading and watching, including social media. Consider a few updates from trusted sources.</p>	<p>Avoid being too immersed in media coverage.</p>
<p>As a parent you may be concerned yourself. Take care of yourself; make sure you have breaks; make time to relax; and ask for help from others if you need it. If you are at home, music, breathing and relaxation techniques, distraction (such as watching something funny), and time with family can all help</p> <p>Identify other adults you can talk to about your own worries.</p>	<p>Avoid 'what if' conversations in front of children.</p>
<p>Give practical guidance: Remind your child of the most important things they can do to stay healthy but, find motivation for keeping going, like thinking of a song they want to sing while washing their hands.</p> <p>Try to keep to familiar routines. Well-known routines in everyday life provides security and stability and also enjoy fun activities together and stay active.</p> <p>Think PLACE (Playful, Love, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy).</p>	<p>Don't be too hard on yourself and fixate on being healthy and strict rigid routines...use them as a guide - you all need some down time...</p>
<p>Home learning may add to anxiety and stress for all. If this is the case, choose your battles and reduce your expectations on what will be achieved. Alternatively, they may be worried about not learning! Reassure them that everyone is in the same boat, they are not likely to 'fall behind' their peers</p>	<p>Don't insist on following the same routine that your child would have been following in school (unless they find the familiar routine reassuring)</p>

The Educational Psychology Service in Somerset have lots of useful information and resources about supporting your children and your own mental health at this challenging time. Here is the link:

<http://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/Services/3242>

Here is a psychologist talking about anxiety during COVID-19 and managing it

<https://youtu.be/6RZDNWKinKE>



There might be times
that almost feel
normal and like
nothing is happening

And at other times
the full reality of
what is happening
might overwhelm you



Take it easy and be
gentle, you're doing
the best you can