



Wellbeing information and support

This is a time of uncertainty and a lot of children will be feeling anxious and worried about what is going on. This is a normal response to the situation and below we offer some advice about what we can do to help and support children and young people. There is a lot of information becoming available - this is great but may also be confusing, so we have pulled together some advice and some of our favourite links in one place. We hope this will be helpful.

Look after yourself

It is understandable if you are feeling anxious and worried yourself at the moment and you may have some very difficult challenges to negotiate. Do look out for things that help you to cope. This will make it much easier for you to be able to respond in the way that you want to when talking to children.

Keeping healthy habits

Where it is possible to do so, try to maintain normal routines as much as possible- for example, in relation to eating, sleeping, studying and playing or downtime. Routines help children and young people to feel safe. Getting outside in nature can also be beneficial. There is evidence that contact with nature boosts mood so, as long as medical advice permits, try to spend time outside with children and young people. If they are not able or do not want to leave the house, encourage them to get some exercise at home – there are lots of free apps or videos available on YouTube.

Watch out for getting caught in vicious cycles

There are some behaviours that it might be easy to get in to at this time that can make anxiety worse in the long run, such as:

- Avoiding things (e.g., a parent sleeping in the bed with their child instead of them sleeping on their own)
- Withdrawing from other people
- Constantly googling for information
- Spending a lot of time talking about worries
- Being on the lookout for danger
- Checking (e.g., looking at news updates a lot)
- Being in your head a lot thinking about things rather than fully doing things
- Washing hands at a level that goes well beyond the medical advice

Be on the lookout for these and other behaviours, and encourage children and young people to notice what helps (not just in the immediate short-term) and what ends up making them feel more anxious.

Talk about worries

It is good to talk about worries and listen to children and young people's concerns. Try to make time and space for children and young people to talk to you. They won't always let you know that they want to talk so look out for signs, such as them staying closer to you than usual. It is great if you can talk to children and young people at the time that they raise worries, as clearly they are feeling able to talk at that time. But we know this is not always possible and it is important to talk at a time when both you and they are not stressed, busy or tired. It can also be helpful to try to avoid discussing worries immediately before bed as things often seem scarier and more worrying at bedtime. If children raise worries or concerns at these times let them know that you have heard their worry and that you definitely want to talk to them about it and agree another time to have the conversation (and stick to this

plan). Then perhaps come up with some other things that they can switch to thinking about instead of engaging in worrying.

How to talk

Key characteristics of situations that create worry and anxiety are a heightened sense of uncertainty, potential threat, and responsibility, and a reduced sense of control so it is easy to see why our current circumstances are fueling anxiety.

So, in conversations with children it is important to help them to:

- a. Recognise that it is understandable to feel worried or anxious
- b. Develop an accurate and realistic understanding of the situation
- c. Recognise simple, practical things that they can do, but also to be clear about the limits of their responsibility

Useful steps

- Be curious and acknowledge their fears and worries
- Help them to feel understood and that their worries are normal
- Gently correct any misunderstandings that they may have
- Help your child to be able to feel in control where they can (and highlight why that is good for others too)
- Be clear about the limits of children's responsibilities
- Highlight the good things
- Find ways to deal with worries
- Take practical steps to feel less worried

Inevitably some children will find this more difficult to deal with than others. Some young people may already be struggling with anxiety difficulties and the current situation may have exacerbated pre-existing worries. If you are concerned about a child or young person and their anxiety is persistent and getting in the way of their lives (e.g., their

sleep, schoolwork, friendships or family life), then they might need some professional help. Your GP will be able to advise further.

[Government well-being advice](#)

<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>

During this time, it's important that you support and take care of your family's mental health – there are lots of things you can do, and additional support is available if you need it. Please contact your doctor if you have any mental health or well-being concerns regarding your children. They have a wealth of experience and can signpost you if further assistance is deemed appropriate.

[Information for families on Well-being](#)

1-7th Feb 2021 is Children's Mental Health week

The theme of this year's Children's Mental Health Week is Express Yourself.

Expressing yourself is about finding ways to share feelings, thoughts, or ideas, through creativity. This could be through art, music, writing and poetry, dance and drama, photography, and film, and doing activities that make you feel good.

*Our free resources will help children and young people to explore what it means to Express Yourself. All the ideas **can be adapted for use in school, for home-schooling, online lessons, or independent learning.***

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/schools-and-youth-groups/>

[Chill Panda app - NHS](#)

www.nhs.uk › [apps-library](#) › [chill-panda](#)

Chill panda – CAMHS approved. Suitable age 6-12

Learn to relax, manage your worries, and improve your wellbeing by measuring your heart rate and following tasks to suit your state of mind. It helps children and their parents and carers understand different emotions and introduces skills to help regulate these including breathing techniques and calming games.

www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk

Are you a parent or carer who is concerned about the mental health of your child or teenager? Do you just want some hints and tips on parenting? MindEd for Families has advice and information from trusted experts and will help you to understand what problems occur, what you can do to best support your family, and how to take care of yourself. MindEd for Families is written by a team of specialists and parents, working together. You do not need to register to use these resources.

[Information for children on COVID-19 -](#)

[RBWM Achieving for children](#)

Hover over resource and select to open:

[Helping children and young people manage anxiety - Download PDF](#) - suitable for teachers

[Coronavirus Children's Book - Download PDF](#) - suitable for early years and ks1

[Responding to the Coronavirus for families - Download PDF](#) - for suitable for families

[BBC Tiny Happy People - Tips, ideas & activities \(external link\)](#)- suitable for early years

[Messages for children from World Leaders](#) - suitable for ks2

[Free Relax Pack for Parents - Download PDF](#)

[Addressing bereavement to a child](#) - suitable for parents