

Information and advice for parents and carers

Looking after yourself, looking after your children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic:

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete. Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for people. Having children and young people at home, often when people are trying to work themselves, adds another layer of stress. It is therefore important to not only consider our physical health during such challenging times, but also to pay attention to our mental health.

It is normal to feel worried, stressed and anxious when we are faced with uncertain situations, but the sooner we acknowledge and learn to take care of our mental health, the healthier and better equipped we'll be to cope with the situation we're having to face.

In this document we are sharing resources which help children and young people, families. This includes the following:

1. How to explain to children and young people what the coronavirus is
2. Resources to use in these in staying at home with your children
3. Resources around well-being.

Looking after yourself

Taking care of our own emotional wellbeing and checking in on others is something that we can all do, and we need to remember that by looking after our own mental health, we'll be best placed to look after our children. Remember when they tell you on aeroplanes that you need to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others? It's like that.

Time is precious, especially when looking after children. However, try to plan your days or weeks to include something from each of the '5 ways to wellbeing' (developed by NEF).

BE ACTIVE

Try to make sure that you and your family get regular exercise every day. You Tube has lots of exercise videos for kids and adults. Get children involved in planning their own 'indoor PE'. If current government advice permits, try to get outside once a day either into your garden if you have one or in a place where there are few people. If you can't go out, open the windows for some fresh air and take some time to look at the world outside.

TAKE NOTICE

Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what's happening in the here and now in your family. Notice and appreciate the small things.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing.

There's lots of good mindfulness apps to try, but if that's not for you, just getting into something you enjoy e.g. cooking, drawing etc and really focussing on it can be just as good.

CONNECT

Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Social distancing is going to make that trickier, but we're lucky enough to have technology to help us out. Think physical distancing, but social connections.

Social media is great, but if you can, try to have phone calls or even video calls. Arrange to Facetime/Skype a friend for coffee, phone relatives more often than usual.

Whilst it can be helpful to share worries, try to find other things to talk about too.

GIVE

Research tells us that giving back to our community helps people to feel valuable and makes us happier. We might not be able to contribute to our community in our usual way, but many people will still be able to find ways to give back.

Lots of community groups are setting up schemes that aim to help vulnerable people at this difficult time. If you want to get involved, check out local social media for ideas.

Many of us will not be in a position to offer practical support. We can still offer mutual support to friends and family by checking in with them regularly.

KEEP LEARNING

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement. Whilst we're busy learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts and worries.

Social-distancing will bring new challenges, but it will give many of us the time to start a new hobby or learn about an area that we've always been interested in.

Looking after your children

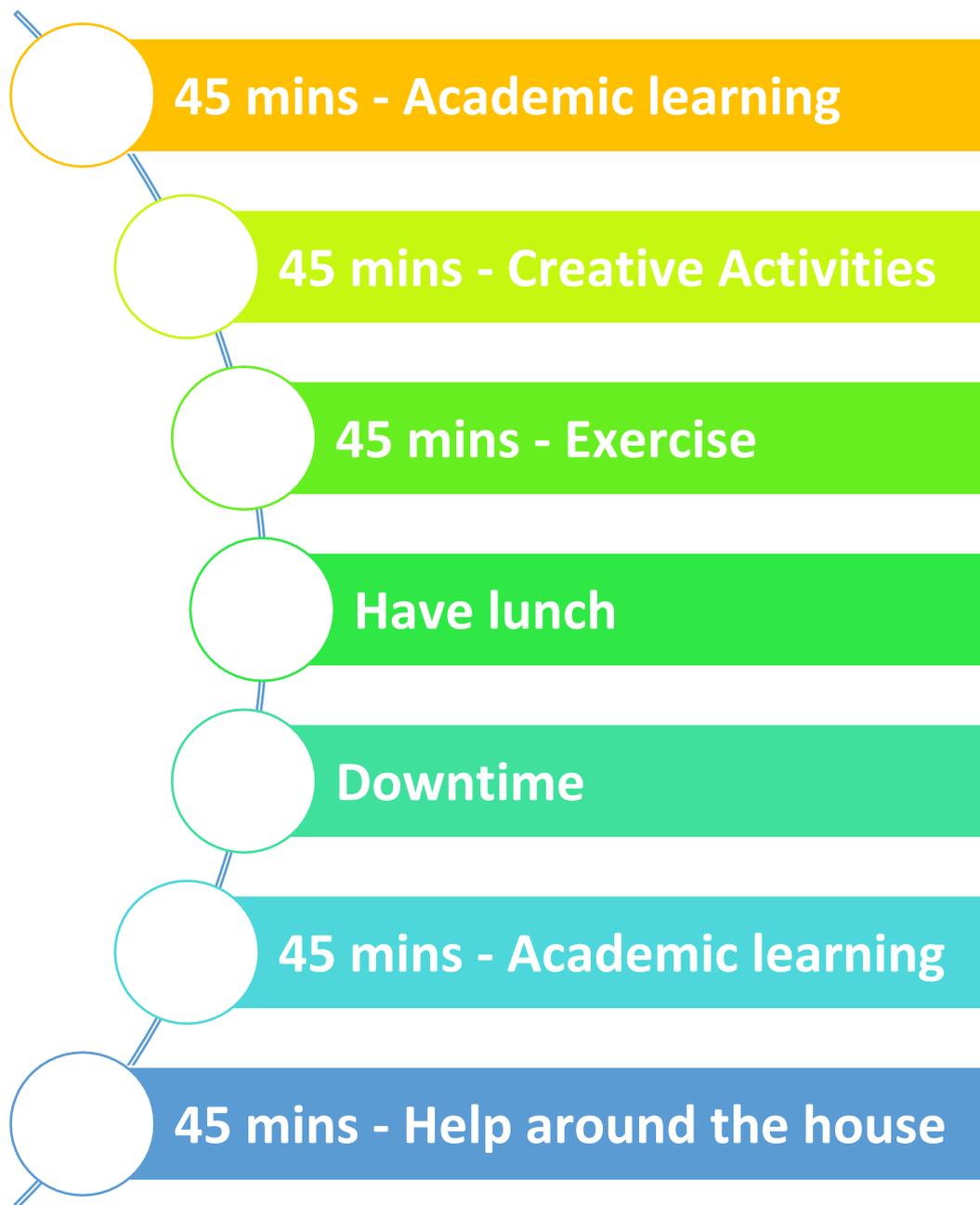
For the most part, children of all ages will need what they've always needed; love, attention and opportunities to learn, interact, move and play. If children are home for long periods because of schools moving to remote learning, social-distancing or self-isolation, the following tips might be helpful:

1. **Remember that schools have not 'shut down.'** Although most children will not be able to physically attend school, you will still receive communication from senior leaders and, in some cases, teachers.
2. **It is important to hold in mind that children will look to you to see how you are reacting in order to know how to feel.** This period of uncertainty can be unsettling, and you may feel shocked or sad that your children will not be able to go into school or experience milestones such as trips, concerts or celebrations in the way that they had expected to. Showing them an example of remaining upbeat, hopeful and discussing the positives or new things that you can try will be helpful.
3. **Have a routine and a structure for your weekdays that works for you.** Keeping bedtime and morning routines close to existing ones can promote a sense of normality that children will find reassuring, as can having a plan and a predictable routine for the day. As adults we like to know what is going to happen, and children like this too. A consistent routine lets everyone be secure about the plans for the day.
4. **Give children appropriate opportunities to have a say in what will be happening.** They may have had a lot of their freedoms and choices removed for a while and may feel powerless or angry. Older children and teenagers will be more able to understand the risks in too much screen time, too little sleep, inactivity etc. They are more likely to 'buy in' to new rules and routines if they feel that they have a voice. Family meetings where children and adults problem-solve together can be helpful for this. (<https://bristolchildparentsupport.co.uk/ready-family-meetings/>)
5. **Avoid putting too much pressure on academic work and don't try to replicate a full school timetable.** It won't be possible for a variety of reasons and giving yourself and your children permission to accept this can feel like a burden has lifted. Concentrate on enjoying shared activities and spending time connecting together.
6. **Do expect children to do some learning every day** (if they are well enough). In the longer-term schools are likely to provide opportunities for online learning. In the short term, or as extra activities there are a wealth of helpful websites, many of which they will be able to access independently, some are listed later on in this document. Continuing with their learning helps promote a sense of normality and purpose as well as keeping them up to date for when they are back at school.
7. **Keep boundaries firm and make it clear that you expect the same standards of behaviour as usual.** Boundaries show that adults are still in control and taking care of them, which helps children to feel safe.
8. **Expect stress.** Remember that stress and anxiety are normal feelings for you and your children to experience in uncertain times. Naming these emotions when you sense them can support young people to make sense of them.

Example Timetables

Get ready for the day	• Have breakfast, have a wash, get dressed
9am Activity 1	• Online learning from school OR a craft activity (cutting & sticking, painting, baking)
10am Activity 2	• Online learning from school OR some writing or maths - write a story, count coins
11am Get active!	• Play in the garden, do an exercise video
12pm Lunchtime	
1pm Help about the house	• Help tidy up, Hoover, wash up
2pm Quiet time	• Do something calm, like reading or colouring
3pm Activity 3	• Online learning from school OR be creative – make some music, design an outfit
4pm Have some free time	• Enjoy toys and tech
5pm Dinner time	• Help prepare dinner – help tidy up too!
6pm Family time	• Play a game, watch a movie, spend time together

- Have a bath, get pyjamas on, read a story



Talking to children about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although it's tempting to try and protect children from difficult topics, they are more likely to worry when they're kept in the dark. Children and teenagers will be aware of what is happening but may not have all the facts they need to understand it.

These tips will help you communicate about Coronavirus with your child:

- Take time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that they have. Be led by your child as they may not be that interested or want to know everything all at once. Try to answer any questions honestly and keep things in context e.g. "Sadly, some people do die, but the vast majority of people will recover, and children seem to be only mildly affected".
- Reassure them that their own risk is very low but that we all need to 'do our bit' to look after people who might be very unwell. Underline how helpful they are being by following the rules about hygiene and social-distancing. Knowing we're being altruistic helps us to bear the tough times.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing as a family to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.
- Remember your child's age and keep explanations developmentally appropriate.
 - Young children up to about age seven will need very simple explanations that relate to their own experiences. Explain that, like other germs, Coronavirus can spread between people and make them ill. But because Coronavirus is a new germ that we don't know everything about, we need to take more care and so things might be a bit different for a while.
 - Older children and tweens will want to know more. They may have heard partial explanations and 'filled in the gaps' themselves with their own ideas, so check what they already think they know about it.
 - Teenagers will have a similar capacity to understand what's going on as adults. They will need calm, factual information and opportunities to talk through their worries and disappointments.
- Give them an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Our instinct might be to 'make it all better', but it is normal to feel scared, sad and angry in the face of what's happening. Tell them that what is happening is not normal but that their feelings are.

Resources for home education

Many schools will be setting their own learning. However, if you need something else to keep them usefully occupied then this non-exhaustive list might help those affected by school closures due to coronavirus, compiled by home educators:

Website	Description
Khan Academy https://www.khanacademy.org	Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it's mostly common material.
BBC Learning http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/	This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV license required except for content on BBC iPlayer.
Futurelearn https://www.futurelearn.com	Free to access 100s of courses, 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).
Seneca https://www.senecalearning.com	For those revising at GCSE or A level. Tons of free revision content. Paid access to higher level material.
Openlearn https://www.open.edu/openlearn/	Free taster courses aimed at those considering Open University, but everyone can access it. Adult level, but some e.g. nature and environment courses could well be of interest to young people.
Blockly https://blockly.games	Learn computer programming skills - fun and free.
Scratch https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/	Creative computer programming
Ted Ed https://ed.ted.com	All sorts of engaging educational videos
National Geographic Kids https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/	Activities and quizzes for younger kids.
Duolingo https://www.duolingo.com	Learn languages for free. Web or app.
Mystery Science https://mysteryscience.com	Free science lessons
The Kids Should See This https://thekidsshouldseethis.com	Wide range of cool educational videos
Crash Course https://thecrashcourse.com	You Tube videos on many subjects
Crash Course Kids https://m.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids	As above for a younger audience

Crest Awards https://www.crestawards.org	Science awards you can complete from home.
IDEA Awards https://idea.org.uk	Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online.
Paw Print Badges https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk	Free challenge packs and other downloads. Many activities can be completed indoors. Badges cost but are optional.
Tinkercad https://www.tinkercad.com	All kinds of making.
Prodigy Maths https://www.prodigygame.com	Is in U.S. grades, but good for UK Primary age.
Cbeebies Radio https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio	Listening activities for the younger ones.
Nature Detectives https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/	A lot of these can be done in a garden, or if you can get to a remote forest location!
Oxford Owl for Home https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/	Lots of free resources for Primary age
Big History Project https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home	Aimed at Secondary age. Multi-disciplinary activities.
Geography Games https://world-geography-games.com/world.html	Geography gaming!
Blue Peter Badges https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges	If you have a stamp and a nearby post box.
The Artful Parent https://www.facebook.com/artfulparent/	Good, free art activities
Red Ted Art https://www.redtedart.com	Easy arts and crafts for little ones
The Imagination Tree https://theimaginationtree.com	Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.
Toy Theater https://toytheater.com/	Educational online games
Twinkl https://www.twinkl.co.uk	This is more for printouts, and usually at a fee, but they are offering a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures.
Virtual tours	https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours Virtual tours of some of the world's best museums

Reference documents:

The World Health Organisation

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2

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

Mental Health UK

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

NEF – Five Ways to Wellbeing: The Evidence

<https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence>

Wang et al (2020) Mitigate the effects of home confinement on children during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Lancet; Correspondence.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30547-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30547-X)

National Association of School Psychologists

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Brooks et al (2020) The Psychological Effects of Quarantine and How to Reduce It: A rapid review of the evidence. In The Lancet Volume 395, ISSUE 10227.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)

The Child Mind Institute

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

Mind Hong Kong

<https://www.mind.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ResponseCoronavirusENG6.2.2020-.pdf>