

Children and Young People's Wellbeing

All children, like all adults, will respond to the current situation in different ways. This will depend on many factors (age, level of understanding, what they like doing etc.) and will likely vary from day to day and hour by hour.

Children look to their caregivers to feel safe and secure. All children, even babies and toddlers, can pick up on how the adults are around them are feeling and

absorb this unintentionally, even if they don't understand it. This means that the anxiety a parent is feeling can have an impact on them, and you may see difficult or different behaviours, such as them trying to seek control or being tearful. **Try and be aware of how you behave around them and reassure them through your actions and the affection that you show towards them.** Children's feelings may show through their play. For example, their play may to start revolving around separation, death/dying, illness, medical care, being stuck or trapped, losing/missing things, being in control, superheroes or saving, scary things or being scared. This is normal, as play is a way for children to make sense of their world and process what is happening around them. Make sure there are plenty of opportunities for them to have free play every day.

For children who find change particularly stressful, **reassure them about what will stay the same in their lives**, despite all the changes. Many children will find it reassuring to be reminded that there is some consistency and may need to be reminded of even the most obvious things. Things that are likely to stay the same in most families include where they live, who looks after them, the fact that schoolwork and homework still needs to be done, the fact that they can still watch their favourite TV programmes etc.

Think about what you can do as a family to support your wellbeing together. These may be things that you already are doing! Some common examples include taking exercise, watching a film, listening to music, and enjoying a meal together, but think about what you and your family like doing something that is special for you.

Coping Strategies for Children and Young People

- Encourage them to write or draw about their feelings, e.g. Childline's mood journal: <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/mood-journal/> and <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Feelings-tab-booklet.pdf>. Some other ideas, including where you choose from a picture/photo and share together: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/145522631685211731/>
- You might want to set aside 10-15 minutes each day for them to talk about any worries and to reassure them. At other times, it may be good to distract them with something that takes their mind off their worries.
- Calming activities from Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/>



- Video tips and exercises:
 - <http://www.safehandstinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>
 - Movement meditation for children who find it difficult to stay still: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buPuB4Sa0zU>
 - A short meditation for young children 'Be a pond': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf5K3pP2IUQ>
 - Breathing exercises <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxbdX-SeOOo>
- Ideas aimed specifically at adolescents: <https://thrivingadolescent.com/adolescent-resources/new-ideas-for-you/audio-ideas/>
- Apps:
 - Think Ninja: <https://www.healios.org.uk/services/thinkninja1>
 - Smiling Mind: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>
 - Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/>
 - Calm: <https://www.calm.com>
 - Stop Breathe and Think Kids: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>

Information and Resources for Young Children (Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1)

- Puppy mind is a story to help young children manage their thoughts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xd7Cr265zgc>
- The Sesame Street website has a lot of information and support for younger children: <https://www.sesamestreet.org/caring>
- Peace Out has short stories that help kids calm down and relax, particularly aimed at younger year levels: <https://bedtime.fm/peaceout>
- **A Terrible Thing Happened** (Margaret Holmes): A story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma (ages 4-8).
- **The Way I Feel** (Janan Cain): Explores feelings and a helpful way to talk about emotions with young children.
- **How are you Peeling: Foods with Moods** (Saxton Freymann & Joost Elffers): Explores how emotions look through pictures of foods. A good way to talk about emotions with young children.

Information and Resources for Children (Key Stage 1 and 2)

- For those children specifically anxious about the coronavirus, there is a story called 'Dave the Dog is Worried about Coronavirus' here: <https://nursedottybooks.com/dave-the-dog-is-worried-about-coronavirus-2/> and video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5zIJJClEig>
- Free audio version of Dawn Heubner's book 'Something Bad Happened: A Kid's Guide to Coping with Events in the News' (aimed at ages 6-12): <https://www.dawnheubnerphd.com/>
- For the next few weeks, Mindful Schools will be offering free live mindfulness classes for children. These might be helpful anchors to give the day some routine and structure: <https://www.mindfulschools.org/free-online-mindfulness-class-for-kids/>
- **The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back** (Margot Sunderland): A story for children who have lost someone they love (ages 4-12).

- What To Do When You're Scared & Worried: A Guide for Kids (James Crist): A help guide to processing fears and worries (ages 9-13).
- **Have You Filled A Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids** (Carol McCloud): Encourages positive behaviour and expressing kindness and appreciation.

Information and Resources for Young People (Secondary age):

- Articles from Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>, <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/looking-after-your-mental-health-while-self-isolating/> and <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>
- One-page guide from Anna Freud Centre: <https://www.annafreud.org/media/11263/option-3-covid-advice-young-people-with-image.pdf>
- Two-page article aimed at teenagers, especially around social distancing: <https://4123n13bqnyphxz1aprww-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Self-isolating-Tips-1.pdf> and another on cancelled exams: <https://4123n13bqnyphxz1aprww-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coping-With-Cancelled-Exams2.pdf>
- Guide for young people: <https://afsp.org/story/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty>
- Kooth is an online counselling service for anyone aged 10-25 in Hertfordshire. You can access a chat/ messenger service, discussion boards, goal setting tools and a journal and a magazine containing a number of articles and some specifically about coronavirus and the impact on children and young people. The website is moderated by trained professionals. You need to register but it is anonymous. <https://www.kooth.com/>.
- Mind – Herts Mind Network have a Young People's online group for those over 15. You can find out more here: <https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/young-peoples-online-group>. They are also delivering a number of workshops online over the next few months for young people/their families to watch online. You can view the calendar and booking information for Eventbrite here: <https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/spot-the-signs-and-emotional-wellbeing>. Alternatively, 15-18 year olds can enrol on a 4 week 'Wellbeing through Learning' course covering various topics, e.g. Anxiety, Building Confidence: <https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/wellbeing-through-learning-children-and-young-people>.
- This guide is particularly focused on parents of teenagers and supporting their emotional wellbeing: <https://4123n13bqnyphxz1aprww-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Tips-for-Parents-2.pdf>.