

# Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19



## Talking to Children about Coronavirus

Children will be looking to the adults around them for signals as to how they should respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes to their daily lives. Therefore, it's important to respond to their questions and concerns as they are raised. Some children may not verbally express their worries so be aware if your child displays any anxiety in other ways such as wanting to be closer to you more than usual.

- Find an appropriate time when you are not in a rush or stressed and preferably not before bedtime. If they share a worry and you are busy, let them know you heard that worry and explain you will talk to them later about it.
- Talk to them in a calm tone while keeping your responses appropriate for their age and understanding. It's ok to let them know you have worries too and you don't have all the answers. It's important they understand a level of anxiety/stress is normal but back this up by explaining how you deal with it. For example, "When I'm worried I talk to a friend then I might bake us all something to cheer myself up."
- Be factual but adjust the amount of detail depending on age. Explain the symptoms and who is more likely to be affected by it, how the doctors are working on a vaccination and explaining why it's important to be separate from grandparents and other family members. Offer comfort and honesty.
- Allow children to ask questions and express their fears. Ask open ended questions to establish how much they know and to offer facts to counter any misconceptions (particularly the level of risk). Don't play their fears down with, "Don't be silly" or "It will be fine" and allow them to lead the conversation.
- Give your child practical guidance in what they can do to help themselves and others, regular hand washing and the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' advice. This will give them an element of control. If you don't know the answer to a question it's ok to say you don't know. Explain that most children and adults will only get mild symptoms and have a temperature and a cough.
- Let your child know the government and scientists are working hard to keep people safe. Avoid comments or judgements about who is responsible for the spread of the disease.

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

- Finally, don't try to shield your child from the news but equally take a break from constant updates, this is not helpful for children or adults. Make sure your information is from a reliable source such as the NHS website rather than social media.
- Point out the positives of the situation, more time together and an opportunity to learn a new skill or hobby, use humour, remain playful and have a "We'll get through this" type attitude.

There are a couple of links on Carclaze Facebook page of resources explaining the Coronavirus to children.

### Mental Health and Wellbeing Tips.

We have all experienced a massive change to our normal daily routines and are now adjusting to a very different rhythm of life. It is normal to feel unsettled and somewhat anxious. It's important to stick to a routine all be it a different one. Below are some key points to help with the changes we are experiencing.

- Stick to a routine. Get up and go to bed as close to your normal routine as possible.
- Get dressed! If your weekends include staying your PJ's that's fine but during the week dress as if you are going somewhere. Shower and dress comfortably, wear bright colours and pamper yourselves.
- Get out in the fresh air for a short walk or in the garden while keeping to the social distancing rules.
- Move. Find an activity to do, dancing, yoga, something you already do or find an exercise programme on you tube to follow.
- Connect to family and friends via phone calls, Zoom, FaceTime or text.
- Eat well and stay hydrated. Avoid picking at snacks and stick to your normal eating times. Experiment with new recipes.
- Be forgiving of yourself. Allow yourself time out from trying to cram something in to every hour of the day. Take the time to sit on the floor with the children and lose yourself in Lego! Chill.
- Be patient with each other. Living on top of each other is tricky. Try not to react to every disagreement, snappy comment or blow up. Everyone will have their wobbly days, support each other through them and forgive often.

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

- Respect each other's space. If someone needs time on their own. Leave them alone.
- Be understanding of an increase of behavioural issues in children. They are struggling with a disruption to their routine and are coping with increased anxiety and worries. However, don't relax expectations of appropriate behaviour but equally don't introduce new behavioural plans or consequences.
- Lower your expectations of what you may or may not achieve each day. Be gentle with yourself.
- Limit your social media and COVID-19 conversations. Find a few trusted sources and limit the amount of times you check them. Two or three times is reasonable.
- Practice gratitude. At the end of everyday reflect on the things you are thankful for however small. Be specific, for example, "I'm grateful the sun shone today and we could all sit in the garden."
- Look for and share with your children the feel good stories, people helping and supporting others.
- Write lists of jobs that you never get around to doing, clearing out your sock drawer or organising the garage. Anything productive.
- Be creative. Try something different. Sculpting, stone painting, drawing, learning a dance routine or music. It's also a great way for children to express their emotions and communicate.
- Laugh. Watch light hearted, funny films or programmes or play silly games. It's important to take a break from the serious issues going on around us.
- Repetitive movement have a calming effect on adults and children such as knitting, sewing, colouring, skipping and drumming.
- If you feel you need help, there are many online support networks to contact. There are some at the end of this pack.
- Remember, this is a temporary situation, unsettling and at times scary but temporary. It's ok to feel overwhelmed and shaky at times, acknowledge these feelings and seek support from family and friends.

As a rule of thumb use PEA! Everyday do something -  
Productive – a job needing done, clean, organise, clear out.  
Enjoyable – watch a funny film, read, cook, talk to a friend.  
Active – walk, exercise, do a YouTube workout, stretch.

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

### Working from home

We are all having to make massive changes to our daily routines. Working from home is one change. This can be particularly challenging with children at home with you all day. Below are some ideas to help you.

- Depending on the child/children's age, think about times they are unlikely to need any attention, before they wake up or during the evening when they are in bed asleep. Try to work during these times.
- Make a plan with your children, involving them and agreeing when you really need to be left to get on with work and when you are going to take a break and play/eat/spend time relaxing with them.
- Be realistic. You are unlikely to be as productive working from home with the demands of caring for your children and that's OK!
- Rewarding children (9yrs and up) teaches them delayed gratification." I need to finish this piece of work this week but once it's done we can spend all day in the garden and have a picnic."
- Have regular breaks, work for 45 minutes, break for 15 minutes. Whatever works for you as a family.
- Teach personal discipline. Set limits. While you're working, agree on only so many questions can be asked. This teaches them to decide which questions do they really need to ask.
- Reinforce the positives, lots of praise when everyone sticks to the plan.
- Plan activities that don't require supervision when you need a clear hour.
- Let the children design a "Do not disturb" sign and a "Come on in" sign.

If working from home is a new concept for your children, they are going to find this difficult to understand. Be patient with them and take lots of breaks. You need playtimes too!

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

### Supporting your child during lockdown.

Some children who already struggle with anxiety, mental health issues or autism, the change of routine and the concerns about the virus can have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing. It's important to give these children strategies to manage the added pressure they are under.

- Talk with your child about a new routine, plan it together and then draw it up, putting it in a prominent place. Don't make it too ridged as this could lead to issues itself.
- Some children need a space to regulate themselves when they are stressed or overwhelmed. Make a corner of a room just for them or if you have a pop up tent, tepee or just a blanket over a chair will do. In this space put all the things that comfort them, favourite soft toys, fidget spinners, anything sensory (play putty, slime, blutac, a lavender bag) a diary or scribble pad, colouring book, bubbles to blow, photos of happy memories, something chewy (sweets or a specifically designed chawring) or a favourite book. These are just examples but whatever works for your child.
- Notice and limit worry triggers. Avoid the radio/tv news updates being constantly on. Listen to the news at a set time each day and deal with any questions from your child as they come up. If your child is unlikely to verbalise a concern, share information, factually without sensationalising it.
- Try to keep your outward mood neutral (or positive) as possible.
- If your child becomes dysregulated and has a "blow up" say as little as possible in the heat of the moment. Have a script in your head of phrases that support, validate and set personal limits to say to your child. For example, "I can see you are really angry and I want to help but it's not ok to hit me,"
- Try to avoid excessive reassurance. Some children will ask the same questions repeatedly. Reassure once then direct them to an activity to keep them in the present moment, a puzzle, baking, etc.

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

- One outburst can affect the mood of the whole day. Try to clock watch when your child is being challenging. This gives you the chance to regulate your emotions and put the time in perspective. Instead of “I can’t get through this” you are more likely to see a 30 minute meltdown within a whole day less overwhelming.
- Wait for everyone to calm down before you have a conversation.
- Be kind to yourself as well as your child. We all have our limits. We all feel scared, angry and upset at times. Forgive each other.

Here are some websites for more information, advice and support:

Young Minds: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

The Mix: [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

Kooth: [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

### Domestic Violence

During this time of isolation, the impact of living with domestic violence is even greater. Seeking help is also more difficult and challenging and the sense of being trapped in your home and feeling unsafe is overwhelming. The government have recognised this and have said victims of domestic abuse ARE allowed to leave their homes during lockdown to seek refuge and support.

Domestic abuse isn't always physical. Coercive control is another form of abuse. How do you know if this is happening to you?

Common behaviours are;

Isolating you from your family and friends.

Depriving you of your basic needs, washing or food for example.

Controlling your time.

Checking your phone. Taking control of where you go, who you speak to or what you wear.

Preventing you from seeking medical help.

Putting you down.

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

Controlling/limiting your finances.

Making threats/intimidating you.

You will find advice and support numbers/websites below. Most of the websites have an “Exit Site” button in case the abuser disturbs you while you are on it.

Make a plan for yourself so you can prepare if you need to get away. If possible, speak to a trusted neighbour or friend and agree on a safe word/emoji you will send so they can phone the police for you.

If a situation escalates at home, try to stay close to exits or a lockable room.

Try to move away from the kitchen where objects are at hand that can be used against you.

Here are some websites specifically for Domestic Abuse:

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Refuge: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

Women’s Aid: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Men’s Advice Line: 0808 8010 327

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Domestic Violence Helpline: 0800 999 5428

Victim Support: 0808 1689 111

Domestic Violence: [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

Safer Futures – Cornwall Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: 0300 777 4777

### Other Helpful Websites and Apps

Mindfulness Apps: Headspace, Day One, The Mindfulness App, Calm, Insight Timer – Meditation.

Mencap easy read –[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

Additude advice for parents of children with ADHD –[www.additudemag.com](http://www.additudemag.com)

## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19

OCD foundation advice – [iocdf.org](http://iocdf.org)

UNICEF-tips for talking to children about COVID-19 [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

Finally, here's an example of a daily timetable. Make it to suit your household. It's just a guide to help stick to a routine, but some days you may just need to go with the flow!



Please feel free to contact me if there is anything more I can support you with. Take care and stay safe.

Best Wishes.

Sam Lenz-Williams

Counsellor at Carclaze Community Primary School

[Slenz-williams@carclazesch.org](mailto:Slenz-williams@carclazesch.org)



## Advice and Information for Parents During COVID-19