

Surrey Adult Learning - Family Wellbeing during uncertain times

As news about coronavirus continues to dominate the headlines and remains a public concern, it is important to look after our mental health, as well as our physical health. This PDF provides useful information and resources to support you and your family during this time.

Self-Care for Parents and Carers

Taking care of yourself is important and allows you to better support others. Have a go at answering the following questions relating to self-care. Could you be kinder to yourself?

Looking after myself

- **Am I getting enough sleep?**
Most adults need between 6-9 hours of sleep every night.
- **Am I keeping physically active?**
Physical activity has lots of health benefits. People who are physically active feel stronger, sleep better and have a general sense of positive.
- **Am I spending time outside?**
Whether watching wildlife in the garden or local park, or during your daily exercise, being in nature can help you to stay positive.
- **Am I limiting the time I spend on electronic devices?**
Limiting news and social media intake can have a positive effect on mental health.
- **Am I connecting to others?**
Although limiting time on electronic devices is important, it is also crucial for positive wellbeing, to stay connected with family and friends during this time.
- **Am I eating a balanced diet?**
Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health and can help you to feel your best.

Am I able to...?

- Talk about my feelings
- Allow myself to cry
- Challenge negative thoughts
- Be kind to myself

Are you able to do any of the above? These are all important parts of self-care.

Mindfulness

Paying more attention to the present moment and to your own thoughts and feelings can improve your mental wellbeing. Some people call this awareness mindfulness.

Mindfulness can help us to enjoy life more and understand ourselves better.

Reminding yourself to take notice of your thoughts, feelings, body sensations and the world around you is the first step to mindfulness.

Mindfulness meditation involves sitting quietly and paying attention to thoughts, sounds, breathing and body sensations, bringing your attention back whenever your mind starts to wander. Try a [Mindful Breathing Exercise](#)

The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

This is a calming technique that can help you (or your child) through tough or stressful situations. It uses the five senses to help connect you to the present. **Take a deep breath to begin**

5 Look

- Note five things that you see and say them out loud

4 Feel

- Notice your body and think of four things that you can feel and say them out loud.

3 Listen

- For three sounds.

2 Smell

- Say two things that you can smell. If you can't smell anything at the time, name two of your favourite smells.

1 Taste

- Say one thing you taste. It could be toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or something you have eaten. If you can't taste anything at the time, name one of your favourite tastes.

Take another deep breath to end

Tips for Supporting Children

Ensuring they get enough sleep and are eating a balanced diet

This may seem obvious but trying to make sure that your child is getting enough sleep, eating a relatively balanced diet, and staying hydrated, is as important for their mental health as it is for their physical health.

Providing routine and structure

Children thrive on routine and structure and providing this for them during this unsettled period is even more important than usual. You can help your child by scheduling daily events, such as getting up, mealtimes, baths and bedtime, for roughly the same time each day.

Sharing and validating feelings both theirs and yours

Talk to your child about feelings, both theirs and yours. Making feelings part of everyday conversation. This can be done in an age-sensitive way and can help children to feel heard and understood. It can also help them to understand and consider the feelings of others. Listening carefully, without rushing or prompting, is important. Using open questions (questions requiring more than a one-word answer), can also encourage a child to share their thoughts and feelings. Tips for Supporting Children

Setting and respecting boundaries

Try to be consistent in relation to the behavioural expectations you set for your child. This will help them to know what is expected, provide them reassurance, and consequently have a positive impact on their behaviour.

Teaching them how to be safe

Coronavirus is scary for most people, but especially for children. Talking sensitively to them about it and educating them about the ways that they can stay alert and safe, can help to reassure them and to ease their anxieties.

Having scheduled family time

Spending time together as a family can help children (and adults) to feel connected and less isolated, especially during this unsettling time, where communication with extended family and friends may be more restricted than usual. Although it can be difficult, allocating time to come together every day can be beneficial for everybody.

Having time for play and physical exercise – preferably outdoors

Play is not only fun for children, but also the best way for them to learn. Regular exercise is beneficial to both physical and mental health. This includes:

- improving fitness
- increasing concentration
- encouraging healthy growth and development
- improving self-esteem
- improving posture and balance
- lowering stress

- encouraging better sleep

Look for opportunities and time for play and physical exercise to be incorporated into your child's routine.

Providing opportunities for creativity

Creative play is an important part of childhood and child development. Through creative play children can develop emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually. Look to include time for creative activities for your child each week. There are various websites offering inspiration for cost-effective, creative activities to do with children.

Limiting time on electronic devices for everyone

Limiting screen time can have a positive impact on physical, social, and behavioural wellbeing. It is important to role model healthy electronic device use to your child – what you do will have far greater impact than what you say!

Helping them to stay connected to others

Although limiting time on electronic devices is important, it is also crucial for wellbeing that your child feels connected with family and friends. Ensure that you make time for this during this unsettled period.

Helping children to express and understand their feelings

Sometimes it can be difficult to express and pinpoint feelings, especially for children. Often one feeling can feel very similar to another, for example, feeling anxious can, at times, feel very similar to feeling excitement. This can be quite confusing!

The information below can help to pinpoint and understand feelings better.

Happy

Loving , Hopeful, Inspired, Proud, Optimistic, Respected, Fulfilled, Confident

Sad

Bored, Lonely, Ashamed, Ignored, Depressed, Isolated, Vulnerable, Powerless

Angry

Hurt, Threatened, Frustrated, Embarrassed, Provoked, Resentful, Irritated, Tired

Worried

Fearful, Overwhelmed, Rejected, Inadequate, Insecure, Alienated, Inferior, Excited

Helping children through an unsettled time

Many things can cause anxiety and often it is the things that are beyond our control.

Recognising both what is within and beyond our control can be useful in the effective management of anxiety. **Have a go at completing the table below with your child. You may even like to try it for yourself!**

Things I can control

1. my thoughts
2. my actions
3. my words
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Things I cannot control

1. other people's actions
2. other people's belief
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Returning to school

Your child might be anxious about returning to school. Completing this worksheet with your child might help both you and your child's teacher to understand their thoughts and feelings to better support them with this transition.

My name:

1. I feel...
2. Three things I want to tell you
3. Three things I am looking forward to
4. Three questions I would like to ask
5. My favourite thing about being at home is?
6. Something I have found difficult is?

The following information from Gwent Community Psychology Services might also come in handy in preparation for school return.

We won't all feel the same about going back to school after Covid-19, and that's okay. Some children might not even know how they feel about going back but may show us in different ways. You might notice them acting differently or that they are quieter than usual

Before Day One

What your child might be worrying about

- It's ok to feel nervous
- Other people will be feeling it too
- You can only do your best
- What can we do together to make you feel less nervous?
- Are there pictures/videos of the school we could look at together?
- Forgotten where things are
- They might not be in a class with their friends
- Being away from mum and dad
- Being told off/getting the new Covid rules wrong
- Will everyone be wearing masks?
- What will my classroom look like?

Children's worries might seem small to adults, but they may seem big to children. We don't always have to fix everything, sometimes being there is enough.

During day one

Helping your child to feel connected to you

- Leave a little note in their school bag or lunch box
- Wearing matching items (e.g. wristbands)
- Sending them a text in the day
- Your child could keep a picture of you both in their bag/pencil case
- You could tie an imaginary piece of string around your thumb and your child's thumb to show that even though you are apart you are still together

Sharing experiences

- How was your day?
- What was the best bit?
- What was the worst bit?
- What are you looking forward to tomorrow?
- Is there anything that would make tomorrow better?

At the end of the day, children may feel differently (tired/have lots of energy). They might need some quiet time wrapped in a blanket to calm or a walk to the park in the fresh air.

New to online learning? No internet? Speak to us and we will try to help
For further information about this or other courses please call or text one of the numbers
below or [email Family Learning](#)

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