



Walsall Council

Walsall Healthcare



NHS Trust

9 tips for supporting your children during the Coronavirus outbreak

*Produced by: Walsall Educational Psychology Service, Walsall Early Help
& Walsall School Nursing Service*

The response to Coronavirus has resulted in a number of significant changes to our daily lives, including the lives of children and young people across the country. Understandably, this can result in feelings of stress and uncertainty for adults and children alike. Some children have now been asked to stay home from school which poses many new questions for parents, the majority of whom have not been placed in this situation before. This document aims to provide 9 tips and ideas for parents to consider during this period. A number of local and national support networks are also signposted within this document.

These tips are described in more detail later on, but in short they are:

1. Follow the latest advice from the government and NHS.
2. Be mindful of signs of stress
3. Listen to your child's worries and concerns
4. Talk to your child and answer any questions they may have
5. Routine is key
6. Fact check
7. Monitor media consumption
8. Know when to ask for help
9. Keep learning

1. Follow the latest advice from the government and NHS.

It is important that you and your family remain healthy and limit the spread of infection to the most vulnerable in our society. Because of its changeable nature, this advice will not be included within this document. This advice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

2. Be mindful of the signs of stress.

This is a stressful time for everybody and it is normal to feel increased levels of stress at this time. However, it is important to take steps to recognize and manage your own stress levels and the stress levels of your children.

Stress is the bodies way of responding to threats to ourselves and those we care about most. Everyone responds to stress differently, and it can make us behave differently. Some people may notice increased levels of activity, restlessness, irritability, have difficulty sleeping, increased/reduced appetite, avoiding others or not enjoying things that they normally like. At times, stress can make us have thoughts that are not true or irrational, such as “i’m not doing enough to protect my family” or “this will never be better”. It’s important to be mindful of your own stress levels and the stress levels of your children. Noticing the signs of stress allows you to respond in the right way.

It is important that you take care of yourself and take steps to manage your stress levels. This can be done by establishing a self-care routine for you and your family. This includes, ensuring that you drink plenty of water, getting the right amount of sleep, taking part in enjoyable family activities, exercising and safely spending time outdoors. Be kind to yourself and recognize times when you may be experiencing increased levels of stress.

More information about supporting your child’s feelings can be found here:

Anna Freud- supporting parents and children through disruption:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnANLAcPRZ4&feature=youtu.be>

A number of charities offer support to people experiencing increased levels of stress and anxiety:

- **AnxietyUK:** 08444 775 774- run helplines, email support, live chats and therapy services for people with anxiety disorders.
- **Samaritans:** 116 123- you can get in touch about anything that's troubling you, no matter how large or small the issue feels.
- **Re-think mental illness, black country emotional support line:** 0808 802 2288- advice and information service that offers practical help on a wide range of topics such as The Mental Health Act, community care, welfare benefits, debt and carers' rights. They also offer general information on living with mental illness, medication and care. <https://www.rethink.org/>
- **Mind:** 0300 123 3393- provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

3. "It is okay to feel this way". Listen to your child's worries and validate their feelings:

Because of the number of changes in your child's life, there are a range of things that may be causing them concern. Some children may be worried about the health of relatives, while others may be missing their school friends. It's important not to assume why your child may be worried, and it's good to make time to talk about things that are worrying them.

It's normal for children to feel anxious or worried at times of change and uncertainty. Conversations with understanding adults can help a child to understand their feelings and identify things that they can do to help them feel a little bit better about the situation.

There are also some activities that can be used to help have these conversations and support your child's emotional wellbeing:

- **Covibook:** an interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing during the pandemic: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

4. Talk to your child about Coronavirus, the current situation and answer any questions that they may have

Children may be confused by all of the changes that are taking place in their lives and it is important that they have the right information to allow them to understand what Coronavirus is and why there have been changes to their lives.

It is important that children have access to information that they can understand. Your child may ask a question that you do not know the answer to, this is okay, and it's okay to tell your child that you don't know either (although you may be able to find the answer together).

A number of resources have been created to explain the Covid and the current situation. Information should be selected based upon your child's age and stage of development. These resources are contained in our "supporting children and young people" resource pack.

More information can be found here:

- **Easy read advice for corona virus:** <https://www.easy-read-online.co.uk/media/53192/advice-on-the-coronavirus-v1.pdf>
- **National Autistic Society:** guidance and helpline for parents', young people and staff: [https://www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/vanguard/news/2020/march/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-advice.aspx](https://www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/vanguard/news/2020/march/coronavirus-(covid-19)-advice.aspx)
- **Mencap:** Easy Read guide to Coronavirus: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Information%20about%20Coronavirus%20ER%20SS2.pdf>
- **Place2Be:** Guide to helping parents answer questions from their children and to support family wellbeing: <https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-information-for-children/>

- **Young Minds:** Talking to your child about Coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

5. Routine is key

It's easy to neglect routine when your normal routines have been disrupted. Routines can provide a sense of familiarity, security and predictability to a child's day that can help to reduce stress. Take this opportunity to create a new routine for your family that includes:

- A set time to go to bed and wake up
- Familiar activities throughout the day
- Set meal times (just like at school)
- Set play times and work times (just like at school)
- Regular family times that include safe opportunities for exercise like going to the park

Many children benefit from routines being displayed visually through the use of visual timetables. A kit to make your own visual timetable can be found in our "supporting young people resource pack".

6. Fact Check

There have been increased incidences of false news reports online and on social media. These reports can sometimes increase levels of stress and anxiety. It is important to check any news against other reports. False reports are likely to increase the stress levels in your household. When reading a news report or social media post, always think, how do I know that this is true? And, is there any other information that supports this news?

The most up to date information about Coronavirus can be found below:

- **World Health Organization:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- **NHS:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- **Government guidance:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

7. Monitor media consumption

It's very important that you stay up to date with the latest news and advice. However, excessive consumption can contribute to increased anxiety. It's important to give you and your family time away from news reports.

It's also important to be mindful of the information your children are exposed to. Younger children are still learning about the world and they may not have the skills required to understand all of the information from a news report. They can latch on to small pieces of information or misunderstand what is said. It may be beneficial to give children access to age appropriate news and information such as news round:

- **CBBC Newsround:**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51698180>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51204456>

8. Know when to ask for help.

Some children may find the current situation very difficult to manage, this may be the first time a child has experienced increased levels of stress. Sustained periods of increased stress can have a negative effect on us all, especially children. This could present as changes to the child's behavior which may include, reduced appetite, changes in the child's sleep patterns, withdrawal from others, low mood, quickly changeable mood (mood swings), being argumentative, challenging behaviors in the home. If your child's behavior changes for a sustained period it may be useful to seek advice from one of the following sources this can be done here:

- **School nursing team:** Telephone: 01922 423349 Parent Text: 07520 634 909

- www.healthforkids.co.uk www.healthforteens.co.uk
- **Walsall Educational Psychology Service**
EPSCoreRequests@walsall.gov.uk
- **FRANK:** 0800 776600- Confidential information and advice for anyone that has worries about alcohol or substance misuse.
www.talktofrank.com
- **Cerebra Sleep Support service:** 01267 244210- Parents can complete an online referral form with details of specific sleep problems via their website and then telephone consultation support can be offered. <https://www.cerebra.org.uk/help-and-information/sleep-service/>
- **Challenging Behavior Foundation:** General Queries: 01634 838739 Family Support Line: 0300 6660126. Information and support for parents regarding challenging behavior. Offer peer support and workshops and talks across the UK aimed to reduce challenging behavior.

A very small number of children may act in a way that places themselves or family members in danger, for example, by hurting family members, leaving the home alone (for younger children) or engaging in other risky behaviors such as substance abuse or messaging strangers or sexting. If your child demonstrates any of these behaviours you should contact your child's school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If this is not possible you can contact Walsall Multi-Agency Support Hub: 0300 555 2866 option 2 (or contact the Emergency Response Team out of office hours - 0300 555 2922 or 0300 555 2836)

If your child or anyone in your family is in immediate danger of significant harm you should always call 999.

9. Keep learning.

It's important that your child has chance to continue developing their education to make sure that they are able to maintain their current levels of achievement. Your child's school will outline work that should be completed while the school is closed. School guidance should be followed, however you may wish to consider including additional learning activities with your child. There are a number of websites and learning ideas included in our "supporting children and young people" resource pack that can be completed while at home. This is a unique opportunity to become more involved in your child's education, why not make learning fun? You could, share a story together, invent a new game or make cards for people who you are not able to see.

Some children may need more support with their learning or they may have extra help at school that isn't available while they're being educated at home; for example, children with special educational needs or disabilities. These children may require different learning resources to those shared by the school. Likewise, they may need support through specialist strategies. Additionally, children with special needs may benefit from special approaches to understanding why their routines have changed, for example social stories. Resources to support this can be found below:

School also provides children with support in understanding their physical, emotional and social development. Some children may be experiencing physical changes due to the onset of puberty that they may find confusing. A number of informative videos are available to support parents to have conversations about puberty with their children.

Help I'm Hairy- A guide to puberty and how to survive it for Key stage 2 pupils.

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/184412852>

Full film: <https://vimeo.com/173863773>

Talk the Talk: Helping parents and carers talk to their children about relationships and sex.

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/75057915>

Full Film: <https://vimeo.com/77487959>

Teaching support

- **Walsall Educational Psychology Service-** advice on how to support children your children's social, emotional and educational needs.
EPSCoreRequests@walsall.gov.uk
- **MENCAP:** 0808 808 1111- Advice and support for people with learning disabilities and their family networks.
<https://www.mencap.org.uk/>
- **National Autistic Society:** Information and advice for autistic people and their families and their friends <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Social stories

- **Elsa social story about coronavirus** <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/>
- **A social story about Coronavirus:**
<https://usevisualstrategies.com/autism-coronavirus-helping-students-understand/>

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