

# CORONAVIRUS

## Advice for parents and carers

Guidance around supporting children and young people's wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak.

Compiled by the Kent Educational Psychology Service.  
(with thanks to Lambeth Educational Psychology service)



### BE KIND TO YOURSELF!

The coronavirus outbreak and school closures can be tough on parents and carers. Remember to be kind to yourself and look after your wellbeing. Reducing your stress wherever possible will help your children to feel calm and safe. Your best is good enough!

### KEEPING A ROUTINE

Having a simple structure to the day with familiar routines will support both adults and children to feel secure during uncertain times.



### PHYSICAL HEALTH

A healthy body supports a healthy mind! Try to build physical activity into each day for you and your children. Walks and runs or YouTube fitness videos are all ways to keep active. Being active doesn't always have to be structured, a dance in your front room to your favourite music is just as good!

### PLAY AND HAVING FUN

Play, laughter, being creative and having time to relax is so important to children and adult's well being. Allow lots of time for the activities you enjoy as a family within your home. Try to remove pressure around home learning and remember that play is just as important.



### STAYING CONNECTED

We may not be able to see our friends and family, but we can still connect with one another. Telephone calls, emails, FaceTime, WhatsApp, Zoom and social media are all ways to keep in touch with those we love.

### LEARNING AT HOME

Doing a little bit of reading, writing and maths every day will help your child to remember what they have learnt in school and support them to feel confident when they return. But learning can also include other activities such as making, creating, building, researching, drama and play.



### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Children and young people may struggle to understand what is going on around them. It is important to talk to them about the coronavirus, changes to their life and other areas that may be concerning them. Talking together can help children and young people manage worries and emotions before they become overwhelming.

# Be kind to Yourself

It is important that parents and carers recognise the thoughts, feelings and emotions they might be experiencing because of the coronavirus outbreak. Changes to routine, fears about health and safety, and juggling work with home learning are examples of some of the challenges parents and carers may be facing. See the suggestions below on how to look after your own mental health.

- It is normal to experience lots of different thoughts and emotions during times of uncertainty. Everyone copes in their own way, so do what is best for you.
- Images on the news or social media or even conversations with other parents may make you feel that you are not doing enough with your children. Try to be kind to yourself. Your best is good enough.
- If you are feeling emotionally overwhelmed, try to let go of the things that are out of your control, such as other people's behaviour and how long this will last. Instead, try to focus on the things that you can control and that will make you feel more resilient. For example:
  - A positive mindset and gratitude for what is good
  - Managing the amount and types of news that you watch
  - Finding time for fun and enjoyment at home
  - Taking care of your body and your health
  - Reducing social media
  - Kindness and thoughtfulness towards others
  - Making time for yourself, even if it is just ten minutes a day
- Try to keep connected to friends and family through using social media (e.g. using WhatsApp, Skype, Facetime, Zoom etc.) Connecting with others can remind us that we have support, reassure us that loved ones are safe, as well as giving us time to talk and laugh.
- Don't be afraid to seek help and guidance.

## Websites and Resources

- [Mind UK: Coronavirus and Your Wellbeing](#)
- [Zero to three: Young Children at Home: The Importance of Self-Care](#)
- [Mindkit: Five ways to Wellbeing](#)
- [Headspace: Mindfulness and Meditation \(currently has a free trial\)](#)
- [Adams Psychology: Coping Resilience and Wellbeing](#)
- [Release The Pressure: Free Mental Health Support in Kent](#)  
Or Free Phone: 0800 107 0160 open 24 hours a day
- [Kent Together: Supporting Vulnerable People in Kent](#)
- [National Women's Aid](#)  
Domestic Abuse helpline on: 0800 2000247
- [Victim Support: Domestic Abuse Support](#)  
080816 89 111
- [NSPCC: coronavirus support for parents](#)



# Daily Routines

Trying to keep a simple structure to the day will be helpful and reassuring for your children. This doesn't have to be rigid, but doing some activities at a similar time each day will help children feel safe and secure.

- Wherever possible, try to have a morning 'wake up' routine, where children get dressed, ready for the day ahead.
- Try to have regular mealtimes, as these are a good way to split up the day and keep consistency.
- Some children may benefit from a more structured day. Strategies like visual timetables or alarms might be helpful to prepare them for changes and transitions.
- Set aside plenty of time for fun as a family! Do things that you enjoy and that make you laugh and smile.
- For young people, it is important that they have space to themselves. It may be particularly challenging for them to be away from their friendship group, so ensuring they have time to stay connected will be important.
- Try to find time each day to be physically active. If you can access outside space and maintain social distancing rules, try a thirty-minute walk, run, cycle or games. If you are unable to get outside for any reason, there are a number of free YouTube 'workouts' available for families to access (see links below).
- Getting a good night's sleep is important for all members of the family. Tips to support children and young people's sleep include:
  1. Keeping a similar routine each bedtime e.g. dinner, bath, story, bed
  2. Try to avoid screen-time an hour before bed
  3. Keep bedrooms quiet, cool and dark where possible
  4. For young people, try to encourage them to do something they find relaxing before bed. May be a warm bath/shower, stretching, deep breathing or having a hot drink.
  5. For young people who are struggling with sleep- if they are unable to fall asleep, encourage them to get up and do something they find relaxing rather than tossing and turning in bed.

## Websites and Resources

- [Joe Wicks The Body Coach: P.E. Sessions for Families](#)
- [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#)
- [Dancing with Oti Mabuse](#)
- [Activity ideas from Dr Dawn Bradley](#)



# Home Learning

Trying to support your child to learn at home can be difficult. Try to not place pressure on yourself or your children to recreate the classroom. Just focus on what is realistic to achieve within the time you have.

It is important to know there are many resources available to support you during this period. Your child's school will be the best place to start, but if not, we have given some suggestions below and links to helpful websites.

## PAIRED READING

Paired Reading is a technique that parents can use to support school age children with their reading at home. It is completed daily, for 5-15 minutes. It has 2 main steps:

### Step 1 - Reading together

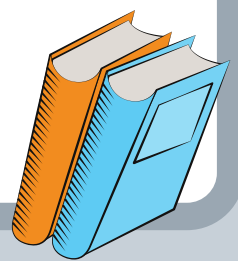
- Read the text together out loud, at a steady pace, following your child's speed of reading.
- If your child gets stuck on a word for longer than 3-4 seconds, pronounce the word clearly for him/her, then continue reading as before.
- Don't worry about 'sounding out' the word.
- Praise your child if they are able to read a tricky word correctly.

### Step 2 - Reading alone

If your child is confident enough, move to this step. There are two methods;

- Gradually lower the volume of your voice, so that your child is reading on their own, OR
- Agree a signal to be quiet (e.g. a knock, sign or squeeze). If the child makes this signal, you should stop reading and allow them to read on their own.
- If your child struggles with a word for 3-4 seconds, then say the correct word and get your child to repeat it but don't worry about 'sounding out' the word.

[Additional Guidance on Paired Reading.](#)



## Websites and Resources

- [BBC Bitesize: Adapted home learning resources](#)
- [Audible: Audiobook company providing free audiobooks whilst schools are closed](#)
- [ChatterPack is a resource page for children and young people with learning needs.](#)
- [Twinkl Home Learning Hub: One month free resources to parents](#)
- [Kent Home Learning Support](#)
- [International Children's Library: Children's books in different languages and from different cultures](#)
- [Ted Ed: Engaging Educational Videos](#)
- [National Geographic Kids: Quizzes and Activities](#)
- [The Hungry Little Minds Website: Support for children 0-5](#)
- [Futurelearn: Hundreds of short courses for older children and young people](#)
- [Senenca: Free revision resource for older children and young people](#)



# Children's Emotional Wellbeing

The coronavirus outbreak may create some difficult thoughts, feelings and emotions for children and young people. It is helpful to be able to explain the current situation using age appropriate language, to reduce the amount of worry or concern children and young people may experience. For some children and young people they may need more support to manage difficult thoughts, feelings and emotions.

The resources below can be used to help conversations around the coronavirus outbreak and any difficult thoughts or feelings that arise as a result. There are also resources to help build resilience and reduce children and young people's anxiety.

## **Supporting Children and Young People Through Difficult Feelings**

Children and young people may share that they are experiencing feelings of worry or having thoughts that are troubling them. It is important that these thoughts and feelings are acknowledged and not dismissed, so that they can cope in healthy ways.

Some children and young people may not be able to express difficult feelings through their words. They may show how they feel through their behaviour, their play and their interactions with others. Some children and young people may develop fears of things such as ghosts, witches, monsters and specific animals. These may be a way of understanding the difficult feelings they are experiencing but are unable to express in words.

Here are some helpful phrases that you could use to acknowledge thoughts and feelings for all children and young people:

***'It's ok to feel bad sometimes. All feelings are normal..everyone feels bad sometimes'***

***'How can I help you to feel better?'***

***'I'm wondering if you are feeling a bit worried....what can i do to help? Shall we talk together?'***

***'I know it can be difficult to see any good in this situation, but we will make sense of it when we can'***

Some children and young people may need to explore how they feel in other ways, such as play, drawing, writing or role play.

It is not unusual for children and young people to explore difficult thoughts and emotions in these ways. It is a safe way to understand what they are experiencing. It is important to allow them space to explore and express their thoughts and feelings in ways that work for them.



## **Talking to children and young people about coronavirus**

- [British Psychological Society](#)
- [Young Minds](#)
- [ChildMind: Video on talking to children about coronavirus](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation: Talking to children about scary news](#)
- [CBBC: Newsround](#)
- [The Autism Educator: Free Social Story](#)
- [Talking Mats simple social story](#)
- [ELSA: Children's story](#)
- [MENCAP: Information sheet for young people with additional needs](#)



## **Managing Anxiety: Younger Children**

- [Explaining Anxiety: 'The Guard Dog and the Owl'](#)
- [Puppy Mind: a story to help young children manage their thoughts](#)
- [Save the Children: Relaxation Exercises For Children](#)
- [Creative Arts Therapy for Children \(Free\)](#)
- [Free ASD Resource: Relax Kids](#)

## **Managing Anxiety: Older Children**

- [Young minds](#)
- [MIND: Coronavirus and your wellbeing](#)
- [The Anna Freud: a list of self-care resources](#)
- [Worry and OCD: Coronavirus top tips](#)
- [Calm: free mindfulness resources](#)
- [Moodspark: Kent based resource for emotional wellbeing](#)
- [Reachout Youth: support for young people's mental health](#)
- [Kooth: Online support for young people](#)
- [The BeYou project: Support for LGBT+ young people in Kent](#)

## **Grief and Loss**

It may be for some families coronavirus will mean having to cope with a bereavement. This may bring up difficult feelings and emotions, even when you are not directly affected. This is normal but can be challenging for families. If you would like more support or help, please see below:

- [Winston's Wish: Information and Helpline](#)
- [Child Bereavement Network UK](#)
- [Cruse Bereavement: Coronavirus Support](#)



# Support in Kent

## **Contacting the Educational Psychology Service**

Your school should be able to offer you guidance and support throughout this time. It is important to keep in touch with them if you have any concerns. Working alongside schools, Kent Educational Psychology service will also be offering free consultations to parents and carers within the county. The aim of this service is to provide advice and guidance to support children's wellbeing and learning during the time of school closures.

Topics or areas of concern that you may wish to discuss could include:

- Anxiety around the current situation and its impact on your children and family.
- Supporting your children's emotional needs.
- Concerns about family relationships.
- Concerns about friendships, learning, daily structure and sleep routines.
- How you can best look after yourself to support your children.

Please contact your school for more information on how to access the service.

## **Websites and Resources**

- [Support for nursery places across Kent](#)
- [Emergency school placement support](#)
- Clarion Housing Association - Service provider for North, West and South Kent (Dartford, Gravesham, Swale and Maidstone, Ashford, Canterbury, Folkestone & Hythe)

Dartford, Gravesham and Swale: 07793 880486

Maidstone: 07739 823395

Ashford and Canterbury: 07773 179082

Folkestone & Hythe: 07739 823395

Clarion Housing Association - Refuge service provider for Medway

Contact: 07889 079242

- [Kent Support and Assistance Scheme \(for those in crisis\)](#)
- [Food bank Tool: finding food banks in the local area](#)
- [Emergency funding for families in Kent](#)

**Acknowledgements:** These suggestions have been informed by those published by Hertfordshire EPS, Croydon EPS, Somerset EPS, Southend Learning Network EPS, Harrow EPS, [www.edpsy.org.uk](http://www.edpsy.org.uk) and Dr Dawn Bradley (Summit Psychology Services). Special thanks to Lambeth Educational Psychology service for their ongoing support.