



Talking about mental health

A guide for parents & caregivers
during the Covid-19 lockdown

Why is it important to be talking about mental health right now?

Coronavirus and the changes it has caused in our lives are likely to impact our mental health. Therefore, now is a really important time for families to feel able to talk openly about how they are feeling.

However, these conversations aren't always easy, especially at a time when we are all likely to be finding things hard. Before asking someone about their mental health you may be concerned that:

- You won't know how to react
- You won't have the right answers and solutions
- You might make things worse

BUT, just opening up the conversation and listening can be enough to make a real positive difference.

- It can help someone realise that others experience similar difficult feelings and can make them feel less alone.
- It can help them to understand what support is available to them and think about how they can look after themselves.
- Just feeling heard can make difficult emotions and thoughts feel less overwhelming.

Remember: we're all human and we all have mental health. You don't have to be an expert to talk and listen.

Looking after yourself

The coronavirus and the lockdown are likely to have brought up a whole range of difficult feelings in all of us and these can sometimes impact our ability to be present and supportive for others.

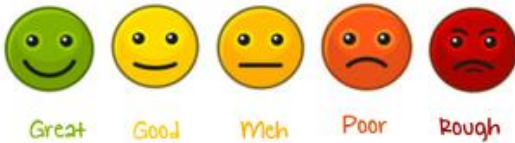
It's important to take the time check in with ourselves, think about how we're doing and acknowledge the things that are difficult at the moment.

Take a few minutes now to look at these charts and think about how you are feeling both physically and mentally.

I'm Mentally...



I'm Physically...



Pick 5 words that best describe how you feel today...

Pessimistic Jealous
Vulnerable Disgusted
Powerless
Heartbroken Angry
Grumpy Judgmental
Irritated Sad Hurt
Isolated Guilty
Unhappy Bereaved
Envious Resentful

Anxious Guarded
Concerned Panicked
Afraid Disconnected
Conflicted Hesitant
Torn Uneasy Worried
Concerned Impatient
Insecure Homesick
Frustrated Relieved
Sensitive Ashamed
Lacking Confidence

Kind Trusting
Empathetic
Appreciative Content
Enthusiastic
Openminded Grateful
Proud Glad Thankful
Happy Loving
Balanced Hopeful
Satisfied Fulfilled
Excited Encouraged

If a lot of these words are more negative, consider doing something that will boost your mood.

Apps like [Stop, Breathe, Think](#), [Daylio](#) and [Worry Watch](#) are also useful for checking in with ourselves.

Some tips for having a conversation about mental health

You are the expert when it comes to your family and it's important to trust your own judgement when talking about mental health with them. However, you might also find these tips and phrases useful.

1. Be patient and kind to yourself

It can be hard to find the right moment to talk. Even if they don't respond straight away, just asking how someone is feeling shows that you care and are there for them.

“How are you at the moment?”

“I've noticed... is everything ok?”

2. Offer support rather than solutions

It's natural to want to fix any problems that our loved ones are experiencing. But often we won't be able to provide solutions and our anxiety about this can get in the way of communication. Take the pressure off yourself to have all the answers and instead empower them to find their own solutions with your support.

“What helps you when you're feeling like this?”

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“What would you like to happen?”

3. Acknowledge and empathise

Let them know that you're glad that they've spoken to you and try to ensure that they feel heard. We may not understand exactly what they're experiencing but we can try our best to understand how they feel. This is often the most helpful we can do! Watch this [video](#) for more advice on empathy.

“That sounds really hard”

“I'm so glad that you talked to me”

“Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?”

Spending time together

Spending quality time side-by-side with each other is just as important as talking face-to-face. In these challenging times finding positive and fun activities to do together can be reassuring and help to reduce stress and anxiety. Time spent connecting in this way can also provide a more relaxed space for families to talk about concerns or worries.

The links below all provide ideas for activities that families may find useful during the lockdown.



Our blog post provides activity ideas for looking after your wellbeing whilst at home



Young Minds have created a list of activities and conversation starters for parents during the lockdown.



March Network have collated lots of creative online initiatives and opportunities which you can access for free

If you need further support...

- [Young Minds](#) have a free Parents Helpline, a 24/7 Crisis Messenger service for young people and more coronavirus advice on their website.
Call **0808 802 5544**, Mon-Fri from 9:30am-4pm
Text YM to **85258**
- [Anxiety UK](#) have extended their Infoline hours in response to coronavirus.
Call **0344 477 5774**, Mon-Fri 9.30am-5pm, Sat-Sun from 10am-8pm.
Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk
Text: **07537 416 905**
Live Chat available during office hours via the website
- [Mind](#) have a coronavirus information hub and a free Infoline
Call **0300 123 3393**, Mon-Fri 9am-6pm
- [Samaritans](#) offer free 24/7 phone and email support for anyone who needs to talk
Call **116 123**
Email jo@samaritans.org