

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Parents as Coronavirus lockdown is easing

Parenting is not easy and recently unexpected pressures have impacted this further. Having extra time to watch your children grow, play, learn new skills and independence is amazing, however it is also really hard work. It is important to remember lockdown has been longer than the summer holidays and has come without outings, friends or family support.

Parents often blame themselves for problems their children may be facing especially for those who struggled during their own childhood, and a mental health problem such as anxiety or depression can make the day to day challenges of parenting even harder.

“You aren’t a bad parent for needing help” Mind 2020

For those parents who have had to work from home during lockdown, you may have struggled to balance being productive at work with your childcare responsibilities. This may be particularly difficult if you have children who aren’t attending school or nursery, especially young children or babies.

“Give yourself permission to take care of your family and don’t feel guilty for doing so” NSPCC 2020

As lockdown eases you might be feeling relived and excited, however you might also find yourself feeling less positive about the changes and you may move through a range of feelings and thoughts.

Top tips looking after your wellbeing whilst having children at home

- Have a support network – keep in regular contact via video calling with family and friends (yours and your children’s) – try to do activities together like grandparents reading stories over the video or activities together such as baking or quizzes.
- Be organised – have regular mealtimes and bedtimes, however be prepared to adapt and be flexible
- Home schooling – check out online tools to make this easier, however try not to put too much pressure on yourself to create the perfect curriculum or fill every hour with schooling -
 - Encourage children to talk about their interests and passions – think about how these could be incorporated into learning – art / play / music / dancing / singing / cooking
- Talk about mental health with your family – yours and theirs – talking about it reduces the stigma of mental health problems meaning any struggles are identified quickly
- Encourage children to write down their worries
- Make a bucket list for after lockdown
- Be mindful of what you see on social media and remember every family is different
- Get out and about and enjoy nature – being physically active or planting seeds in gardens or pots

“It’s easy to over-compensate by trying to be a ‘perfect parent’, remember though that all parents have difficult times and there is no such thing as being perfect.” NSPCC 2020

And if you are working from home with children in the house, remember to:

- Ask children for help around the house (age specific)
- Take regular breaks to rest and relax

“Remember no parent is perfect and it’s ok to struggle.” NSPCC 2020

Feelings caused by the easing of lockdown

There are many feelings which the easing of lockdown can cause including stress, anxiety, anger, powerless, especially as things are changing so fast.

Mind remind us that there are no normal feelings during lockdown and its okay to change how we feel often, what is logical one day may not be the next.

Your feelings are influenced by things which are different to others – your own experience, what has happened to you, what is in your control and what is not. It is also important to remember that other people may follow the rules differently to you.

Some of the things you can do to manage these feelings are:

- Get practical support from family or friends, and NEL Education Psychologists are currently operating a Covid parent helpline – 01472 323308
- Talk to someone you trust, someone you know or the Samaritans, 116 123, they are there to listen about anything you are worried about
- Get creative – decorate, garden, learn a new skill
- Make choices about what you can control – for example where you go and who you see.
- Seek help with your mental health if you are struggling to cope – through your GP or the Single Point of Access (SPA) 256256, option 3.

Anxiety and Coronavirus

The coronavirus outbreak has affected people in many different ways, including causing many people to feel more anxious than they previously did. It is important not to ignore anxiety feelings.

Symptoms can include restlessness, feelings of dread, being on edge, difficulty concentrating or sleeping, irritability and physical symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, heart palpitations, sweating, and shortness of breath, amongst others.

Sometimes feelings of anxiety are short lived, other times they can affect day to day life – when this is the case it is important to speak to a GP or mental health professional.

Some ways to help deal with feels of anxiety are:

- Do something you can control – such as writing down how you are feeling, then allow yourself to let it go.
- Be physically active – Exercise can help release hormones which can help you feel more in control and happy.
- Think about the food you are eating – are you getting enough energy and vitamins?
- Try to get enough sleep – try techniques such as relaxing, turning down the lights, having a bath, stopping technology, especially media and social media before bedtime
- Try breathing exercises – these can help you cope and feel more in control and learn about mindfulness.

Helpful Websites

Mental Health Foundation: How to overcome fear and anxiety

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/a/anxiety>

Mind: Anxiety and panic attacks

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/self-care-for-anxiety/>

Mind: Coronavirus and your wellbeing

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Mind: Managing feelings about lockdown easing

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/managing-feelings-about-lockdown-easing/>

NSPCC: Coronavirus and parents working from home

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/coronavirus-parents-working-from-home/>

NHS – Every Mind Matters

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Young Minds: Look After Yourself

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-survival-guide/#looking-after-yourself>

Young Minds: Talking to your child about coronavirus

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

Story to teach children how to fight Covid-19

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-04/My%20Hero%20is%20You,%20Storybook%20for%20Children%20on%20COVID-19.pdf>

Local and National Helplines

Adult's mental health contacts

- North East Lincolnshire Mental Health Service ([NAViGO](#)) – 01472 256256 option 3
- [The Samaritans](#): Freephone 116 123 via email at jo@samaritans.org
- [CALM](#) – Campaign Against Living Miserably – 0800 585 858
- [North East Lincolnshire MIND](#) – 01472 349991

Parent support

NEL Education Psychologists are currently operating a Covid-19 parent helpline – 01472 323308

Reasons to call this helpline:

- You are concerned about the impact Covid-19 and lockdown has had on your child/children, including not sleeping / won't do school work / is anxious about going back to school
- You are experiencing stress because of parenting challenges during the pandemic and are concerned these stresses may pass onto your child/children

If you're concerned about your child's mental health

- Young Minds Matter, NEL's CAMHS: 01472 626100, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Out of hours – 01472 256256 option 3
- Free and anonymous support for young people [Kooth](#): – Weekdays 12pm to 10pm / Weekends 6pm to 10pm
- School Nursing Service – Confidential and anonymous support for young people (11-19 years old) weekdays 9 to 5pm. Text 07507 331620