Advice for Parents

Covid-19 and how to support your children's emotional health

Keep a routine and structure – keeping things as consistent as possible is reassuring for children as much as for adults. Try to encourage your children to help you to put a timetable for the day together. BUT don't worry if it doesn't always go to plan. If things become stressful allow things to change, trying to get back to the routine later on in the day. Encourage a healthy diet, make sure children and young people continue to go to bed at a regular time and that they get up at a regular time.

Don't make school work the priority at all times (sorry schools!) – trying to support your children to work for the duration of the school day at home is unnatural and will be difficult so do the best you can, offering them regular breaks and time away from study. If you can, try to support children and young people to study in one area of the home, meaning that they can leave this behind when it is time for a break or it's the end of the "school day".

Give children and young people reassurance.   This is a very strange and difficult time for us all and children need to know that it is normal to be anxious about what is happening at times. Reassure them about the situation and make time to listen to their worries and concerns. Don't talk about the situation constantly or let children and young people have access to news about it all the time as this will only make you all more anxious. They don't need to know everything, but need to know enough so not to worry too much, no matter how old they are.

Things will get stressful! Know that this is normal! Ask for help from others. If you are lucky enough to have support within the home from other adults or older children then agree with them when you will all have time out from each other and how. Use friends and family for emotional support online or via the phone. There are a significant number of organisations offering help and support to parents during this time.

Have some fun and exercise! – Find ways of doing something fun together during the day to break up the seriousness of the situation, and the routine of work. Baking, puzzles, board and card games. Find some exercise and activity that you can do together – a daily family walk or bike ride, Joe Wicks PE lesson online at 9am every morning, online yoga, kicking a football around the garden, playing catch.

Keep in touch with schools – schools will be finding ways of keeping communication with you and your child/young person.   Make sure you know who it is you need to contact with any questions and how you can get hold of them.

Help your children to keep in touch with their friends virtually! It's really important that children are able to keep in contact with their friends and wider family. This will improve their mood and help them to feel less isolated. Use Skype, Face time, phone, Zoom or, if old enough, social media sites like Instagram (13+ with parental permission only). Young people will find it particularly difficult to stay away from their friends. Let them know you know that it's frustrating for them and listen to their worries and feelings about it.

Helpful Resources/Organisations

Mind.org.uk – search "coronavirus" for strategies and support for mental health during this time

www.good-thinking.uk - a for adults looking for resources to support their mental health and wellbeing

Youngminds.org.uk – information and advice on how to talk to your child about the coronavirus

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