

COVID-19 – Coronavirus

# Mental health and wellbeing guidance for parents/carers and children



**This is an uncertain time and any worry and anxiety which you may be feeling is normal. It is important that we look after not only our physical health but also our mental health and in so doing, parents will be better placed to look after children. Remember the aeroplane safety briefings that advise putting on your own oxygen mask before helping others – it is like that.**

Our circumstances may have changed but our children's needs have not - love, attention and opportunities to learn and play. In order to ensure that your child's core needs are met the 'five ways to wellbeing' offers a great template for you and your children. Involve them in planning ideas to cover each of these aspects to maintain wellbeing.

**GIVE** - Research tells us that giving helps people feel valuable and makes us happier. During this period you can involve your child in supporting friends, family or neighbours who may be isolated. For friends and family you could send pictures of them and their work/creations and for neighbours you could check they are able to get food and supplies and have your child help with listing and packing these. Support charities, locally or worldwide, which provide care for children and make your child aware of this.

**Be ACTIVE** - Getting regular daily exercise is important for everyone. There are a lot of websites and YouTube videos that can guide you, whatever your current physical capabilities. Encourage children to plan physical activities in the home or outside where possible, such as dance routines or assault courses. Older children may respond better to fitness videos.

**CONNECT** - Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Physical distancing is going to make that trickier but try to have regular phone calls with friends and family, and use a video chat app like Facetime or Skype where possible. For you, try to find things to talk about other than the virus (however difficult that might be at the moment) and for children perhaps they could read to other family members over video.

**LEARN** - Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement. When we're busy we are less likely to have anxious thoughts and worries. Many people may now have more time to start a new hobby. Maybe learn something new WITH your child. When children are doing activities set by school, help them see these as learning rather than 'work'.

**Take NOTICE** - Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what is happening in the here and now; in your own body, thoughts and with family. There are many good mindfulness apps to try (e.g. Headspace) but if that is not for you then getting into something you enjoy, like cooking, drawing, reading and really focusing on it can be great. Encourage children to take notice of things, including how they are feeling.



If children or young people are at home for long periods due to physical distancing or self-isolation, the following advice may be of help.



**Expect stress** - this is an uncertain and unpredictable situation, stress and anxiety are normal.



**Reassure children** - that it is the adult's job to make sure things are ok and to keep them safe.



**Routines** - • Don't worry if the routine isn't perfect - please remember, this is not a normal situation.



**Keep boundaries firm** - expect the same standards of behaviour so that children feel safe.



**Play** - this is fundamental to wellbeing and development at all ages and a de-stressor for adults.



**Normalise the experience** - explain that many other people are in exactly the same situation.



**Friends** - Help children to keep in touch with friends - this builds resilience in children and young people.



**Less rolling news** - Reduce access to rolling news - as this could be overwhelming and distressing at present.



**Supervise children with screens** - monitor their activity and balance with off-screen activities.



**School timetables** - Do not try to replicate a full school timetable - there is no expectation that you will take on the role of teacher.



**Focus on wellbeing** - Avoid putting too much pressure on academic work - focus on wellbeing so children may learn well.



**Develop some structure** - and give children a say in what will be happening - by agreeing rules and routines as a 'family'.



## Physical Wellbeing

The Health Improvement Commission has produced stay-at-home resources for parents/carers and these can be found at [healthimprovement.gg/services/be-active/be-active-home](https://healthimprovement.gg/services/be-active/be-active-home)



## How to talk to children about COVID -19

When your child or young person is asking about COVID-19, below are seven simple tips from Save the Children.

- 1 Become informed and share the facts at your child's level of language and understanding.
- 2 Tailor your approach to your own child – will more information make them more anxious?
- 3 Approach the subject simply and calmly – so that your child sees that you are coping with it.
- 4 Ask your child what they know, answer their questions and address any misinformation.
- 5 Validate feelings and reassure – 'It is a bit scary but we are keeping safe and healthy by...' .
- 6 Remind them of what they can do – thorough hand-washing, covered coughing, sleeping well.
- 7 Model good hygiene and make it fun – a hand-washing song, going to bed rhyme etc



## Praise

Praise is one of the most powerful yet poorly understood tools within our interactions with children. Through praise we support children to work out how to make the best choices – and then to keep on making them. Many schools in Guernsey have supported pupils to develop a **Growth Mindset** which promotes the process of learning itself as the point of the task. Through praise we should help children to think about how they can: grow and develop, embrace challenges, accept feedback, focus on the process, seek advice, not give up, learn from any mistakes.

### Do it right. Do it well.



Praise the **process**  
not the person



Focus on the **efforts**  
not the outcome



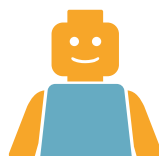
Be **specific**. Avoid  
generic statements



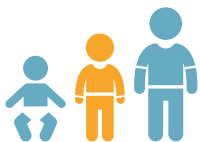
Use **simple** statements



**Do not overpraise**



Be **genuine**  
and sincere



Give **age appropriate**  
praise



**Avoid comparisons**



Catch your child  
**doing good**

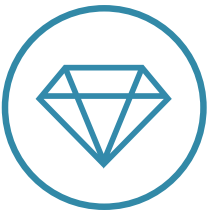
How do you  
praise your child?





## Keeping children safe

NCA-CEOP is a UK organisation which protects children and young people and it has produced the Thinkuknow education programme to keep all ages of children and young people safe from harm. It's a great interactive tool so please follow this link to find it: [thinkuknow.co.uk/](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/)



## Great things

Please do not underestimate the importance of the time which you spend at home with your child.

*'Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country, the creators of our national wealth, those who care for and protect our people', **Nelson Mandela***