

Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak

During this time, it's important that you take care of your family's mental health – there are lots of things you can do.

Helping children and young people cope with stress



Listen and acknowledge:

Children and young people may respond to stress in different ways.

- Upset/ Distressed/ Anxious
- Become Clingy or withdrawn
- They may experience stomach aches

It is important to manage your own emotions and remain calm & speak kindly to them

Provide clear information about the situation:

- Talk openly about what is happening and providing honest answers to any questions
- Explain what is being done to keep them and their loved ones safe
- Explain why they are washing their hands regularly.



Connect regularly:

- Make sure you still have regular & frequent contact via the phone or video calls with them.
- Try to help your child understand what arrangements are being made in simple terms.

Create a new routine: Routine gives children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty, so think about how to develop a new routine – especially if they are not at school.

- Make a plan for the day or week that includes time for learning, playing and relaxing
- Plan time outside if you can do so safely or see [Change4Life](#) for some ideas for indoor games and activities
- Don't forget that sleep is really important for mental & physical health. Keep to existing bedtime routines



Limit exposure to media and talk about what they have seen and heard:

- They may become distressed seeing repeated coverage of the outbreak in the media.
- A news blackout is rarely helpful as they are likely to find out from unreliable sources

How children and young people of different ages may react

For preteens and teenagers

- Respond to worrying situations by acting out.
- Become afraid to leave the home.
- They may cut back on how much time they connect with their friends.
- They can feel overwhelmed by their intense emotions and feel unable to talk about them.
- Their emotions may lead to increased arguing with the people around them
- They may have concerns about how the school closures and exam cancellations will affect them.

Please refer to the strategies above or direct your concerns to the devoted support mechanisms below.

Helplines and websites for your child and or young person

- [Shout](#) provides free, confidential support, 24/7 via text for anyone at crisis anytime, anywhere.
- [ChildLine](#) provides a confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem. It comforts, advises and protects.
- [The Mix](#) provides a free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem

Use words and explanations that they can understand and make sure you use reliable sources of information such as the GOV.UK or NHS website – there is a lot of misleading information from other sources that will create stress for you and your family.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>