

Supporting Children & Young People at Home During School Closures

These are very unusual and uncertain times for everyone. We've had a few weeks to make some adjustments and try to cope with the changes in our lives. There is a lot of information available which can feel overwhelming. This document provides an overview of key messages and recommended resources which you might find helpful. The most important thing is to offer care and compassion to yourself, and those around you, and support each other through this uncertain time.

These are some key ways you can help your child to feel safe and calm and have some fun whilst at home:

1. **Talk about Coronavirus**
2. **Create routines**
3. **Keep learning**
4. **Keep active & plan regular movement time**
5. **Stay Connected: Talk and listen to your child and have fun together**
6. **Take care of yourself the best you can**

1. TALK ABOUT CORONAVIRUS



- Find out what your child already knows including misinformation. Remember a daily stream of news might increase anxiety. Try to be aware of what they are watching or overhearing.
- Think about what information is most relevant to share with your child e.g. schools are still closed, we can phone Grandparents instead of visit, we still have to wash our hands to keep well.
- Give them factual information but remember their age and stage of development. Focus on what we can do to keep everyone well.
- Prepare your child for what happens next e.g. what they are doing later today or tomorrow. Avoid putting timeframes on when the current situation will change.
- You might need to revisit this conversation over several days or weeks as needed.

More information is available regarding talking about Covid-19 from the British Psychological Society:

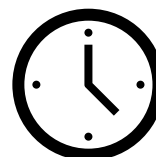
<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Talking%20to%20children%20about%20coronavirus.pdf>

2. CREATE ROUTINES

Where possible, try to maintain normal routines and structure. This is important as it helps children and young people to feel safe and secure and can reduce any feelings of anxiety they may have, during this period of uncertainty. It also helps to maintain good eating and sleeping habits and promotes positive family relationships.

Daily Routines

- Set times for going to bed and getting up in the morning.
- Maintain self-care routines e.g. showering, changing into daytime clothes.
- Have regular times for meals.
- Have regular opportunities for fresh air and exercise, as far as this is possible.
- Try and limit time on electronic devices, where possible.
- Respect each other's privacy and give space where you can.



Try to limit how often your child is exposed to the news as this might increase their anxiety.

Creating New Routines

- Make Monday to Friday different from the weekend by structuring the timings similar to a normal school day. However, it is important to remember you can not replicate school at home.
- Structure your child's day so they have a variety of activities and breaktimes.
- Create a menu of activities that your child can do through the day such as tasks provided by school, household chores, on-line learning, games, art activities, music, play, outdoor activities, and reading.
- Make a daily plan with your child and share it with your child the night before so they know what is happening the next day.
- Review the day's activities and talk about what they have done. Focus on the positives, a sense of accomplishment is important for children and young people.

Helpful websites with information about setting up routines:

<https://www.aspep.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/C-19-Daily-Routine-for-Home-Template.pdf>

<https://www.aspep.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/School-Closure-Toolkit-supporting-ASD.pdf>

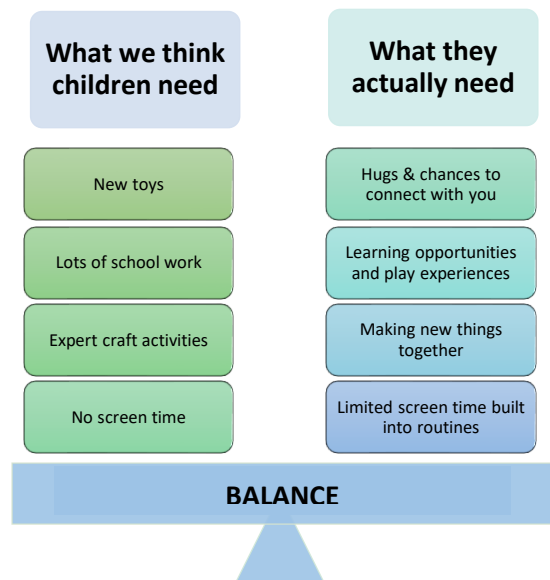
3. KEEP LEARNING



Your child's school will be providing learning resources for you and your child to use at home and this is the best place for you to start.

When planning learning and educational activities at home it might help to:

- Remember that a good home learning environment encourages children and young people to have positive attitudes to learning, to be curious, and to have confidence in themselves.
- Try to give your child some control over their learning – give them options of when, where and how they might work.
- Work with your child to identify a list of activities that will keep them busy.
- Try and include tasks that your child can complete on their own to give them a sense of independence and allow you time away.
- Encourage your child to set themselves some learning goals and targets.
- Tap into your child's interests – we learn best when activities are motivating and meaningful.
- Have realistic expectations -learning happens when we feel calm and comfortable. Encouraging and pushing children to engage in learning activities when they are feeling stressed may increase their levels of anxiety.
- Be flexible, if things are not going to plan, try making the task shorter or move onto something more motivating.
- Encourage your child to talk about and tell you what they have done. This helps to give a sense of purpose and achievement.
- Stay positive - Showing an interest in your child's work and encouraging them can make a real difference. You don't need to know the answers!
- Praise your child for their effort e.g. "you've worked so hard on this, well done!" or "you have found a great way to do that, it worked out really well".
- Remember everyday life, playing and talking are all important for learning. Be creative, use your imaginations, join in their play and have fun together.



If you are looking for some extra ideas, there are plenty of easy-to-use materials out there. It can feel quite overwhelming, so these are a few key sites that might be helpful:

https://www.parentclub.scot/ Scottish Government website with sections on learning at home and links to helpful educational resources.	https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-at-home/ Education Scotland website Parentzone - guidance and support for parents and families regarding learning at home.	https://www.playscotland.org/ Fun activities for children and young people. Includes ideas for indoors and confined spaces.
https://www.scottishbooktrust.com Ideas and activities to help parent's encourage children to read. Includes reading, writing and counting activities.	https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/learn Bitesize is the BBC's free online study support resource for school-age pupils in the United Kingdom. It is designed to aid pupils in both schoolwork and, for older pupils, exams.	https://digitalteachingandlearning.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/parent-factsheet-04-19-web-with-links.pdf Information and safety tips for supporting your child on-line.
https://bumps2bairns.com/ Ideas to help young children learn at home through play (Highland Council)	Autism Toolbox: Resources and links recommended for practitioners and families who are supporting autistic children and young people at home during the school closures http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/supporting-children-and-young-people-home-coronavirus	Resources and ideas for supporting children and young people with complex additional support needs learning at home over the coming weeks. https://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/complex-needs-home-learning-resources/



4. KEEPING ACTIVE

Moving around and being physically active is something which is important for **everyone**. It can help improve our mood and how well we can learn and manage our emotions. Because we are all spending so much extra time inside right now, it will be harder to be active in the ways we would be normally. Children still need to move and use their bodies and voices with opportunities to play, be loud and jump around. There are lots of good ways everyone can keep active and healthy. Making physical activity a regular, fun and predictable part of a daily routine will be something which will help children (and adults!) manage best and improve wellbeing.

Inside Ideas

Active Screen-time



- Joe Wicks' Youtube Channel: daily workouts for children (and adults!) : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>
- Change4Life and Disney Shake Up : short and fun activities involving Disney characters <https://www.nhs.uk/10-minute-shake-up/shake-ups>
- Yoga cosmic kids : fun yoga for children using storytelling <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Fun activities and challenges



- Active Schools: A-Z of fun activities and challenges:
- <https://www.joininedinburgh.org/sports/active-schools/activeathome/>

Creative Play



- Create a mini obstacle course
- Put some music on and dance
- Sing songs with actions and movement
- Play balloon tennis
- Play Scotland have lots more fun and free ideas: <https://www.playscotland.org/parents-families/games/>

Outside Ideas*



- Go for a walk near your home. *To make it more fun you could play 'I spy' or try to avoid the cracks in the pavement!*
- Bounce on a trampoline
- Skip with a skipping rope
- Ride a bike
- Play chasing games

*Remember to keep your social distance

5. STAYING CONNECTED & EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY



Both you and your children need to feel connected to feel emotionally healthy. When we are not able to see our friends and loved ones in the way we are used to it is unsettling, especially during a time of uncertainty. To help our families we can:

- Plan different ways to stay connected to the important people in our lives.
- Try to stay connected to things that we miss, such as important parts of our usual routine and interests.
- Connect to our hopes for the future, even if we're not sure when they will happen.

Think about who and what you want to stay connected to, as well as your child, and put some time in your routine for this.

Sometimes, when we are able to keep in a routine and are learning, active and connected, then we stay emotionally healthy. Sometimes we also need a little extra help to cope with worries, low mood and fears.

Who Will You Connect With?

Friends Teachers Family outside your home

Think about what you value as a family.

Your values might include love, respect, humour, patience, courage, honesty, caring, openness, kindness.

Plan one thing you can do each day that uses one of your values.

Putting a message in your window.

Some people have used:

Rainbows

Teddy bears

Who would your family like to thank at this time? Would they like a message in your window?

Video calls through Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Zoom

Writing and drawing:

Letters

Emails

Making cards, which can tell people we are thinking about them.

Your family might like to draw a map of your local area, and post messages to friends and family.

Making plans for the future

Spend some time as a family thinking about what you are looking forward to when you don't have to stay at home.

Ideas can be drawn or written and posted in a hopes jar, scrap book, pinboard, collage so that you can share as a family

What will be good about these plans? What can you do now that might make you feel a similar way?

Avoid saying when you think these things will happen because we can't be sure for a while.

Extended family Group leaders Neighbours

If you are looking for some extra ideas, there are plenty of easy-to-use materials out there. It can feel quite overwhelming, so these are a few key sites that might be helpful:

Resources for parents and carers	Resources for children and young people
If you have 5 minutes, watch 5 Tips for Staying Mentally Well During the Cononavirus Pandemic https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GmQijmUrk&feature=youtu.be	Things you can do together: • Relaxation and Co-regulation activities • Make and use a worry box • Use a mindfulness or movement meditation • Wellbeing activity sheets
If you have 10 minutes, read Talking to your child about illness. https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy-Files/Talking to children about coronavirus.pdf	Your child might also want some resources to use on their own. These might include: • Mindfulness exercises • Grounding exercises
If you have 15 minutes, find out: How to support someone having a panic attack https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/how-you-can-help-someone-having-a-panic-attack/	• The YoungScot Website for wellbeing and facts on Coronavirus • YoungMinds Crisis Messenger - texting service

6. LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Kindness and Compassion



At times when many people are feeling anxious and uncertain, it is important to try to increase our levels of kindness and compassion, towards ourselves and other people. While everyone is at home for a long period, relationships can become strained and taking the pressure off yourself and others can be supportive. If things are not going to plan, take a break and do something relaxing. Allow children to do the same and be kind to yourself if everything falls apart for a bit. It will happen to us all.

Why is it important to be kind to ourselves?

- If we are kind to ourselves it is easier to be kind to others
- We are more able to cope with stress and anxiety
- We are modelling to our children how to be self-compassionate
- We are more likely to experience emotional warmth for our children

Why is it important to be kind to others?

- This is linked to feeling happier and improving well-being
- It helps social connection among adults and children
- It promotes positive parenting by improving parent/carer-child relationships
- It buffers against the negative impact of stress

How can we be more compassionate to ourselves and others?

- Do kind deeds for your family, friends and community
- Avoid judging others
- Practice gratitude – reflect on things in your life you appreciate and notice things that are going well
- Cut yourself some slack, forgive yourself if you think you have made mistakes and give yourself little treats and rewards
- Have realistic expectations about what you, your family or other people are able to do at this time. It is OK to feel overwhelmed and be unproductive



Positive Mindset

We always say, 'if only I had more time'. We do now. This is the time to try and do things a bit differently. We can slow

down a bit, have family meals, take up mindfulness, read more. It is important for adults to try and find the positives in what is a very difficult situation and try to 'grow' these. If we can get something positive out of the situation, we feel like we have achieved, and we feel better. This will translate to our children as they will pick up on our emotional states. Our mindsets will also influence the way that we support our children, while modelling how to approach difficult situations and subsequently develop their own resilience.

How do we try to adopt a positive mindset?

- Start the day with a positive statement or plan
- Focus on the good things, however small
- Change negative self-talk into positive self-talk
- Listen to positive friends, family or co-workers when seeking advice
- Accept the changes to your life and recognise what you can and are doing to manage

Please see below further advice to help you to look after yourself

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

Asking for help

- When things are feeling very difficult it can make a big difference to speak to someone about the problem. This could be trusted friends or family. Other contacts for help include:
- Psychological Services: 0131 469 2800
- Edinburgh Together Parentline (for support and advice): 08000 282233
- If you or someone in your family is unwell, further information on what to do can be found on <https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-coronavirus-covid-19>

Additional Sources of helpful information can be found here:

- **City of Edinburgh Psychological Services** for advice on home learning and wellbeing. Tel: 0131 469 2800 (Monday to Thursday – 9am to 5pm), leave a message with your name, number and school and an Educational Psychologist will phone you back as soon as they can. Alternatively you can email us at Psychologicalservices@edinburgh.gov.uk
- **Child and Adolescent Health Service - CAMHS** - <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/camhs-information-for-parents-and-carers/>
- **Child protection concerns** – Social Care Direct – Tel 0131 200 2324
- **Support for all parents and carers** - Parent Club - <https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/health/coronavirus>
- **Care Experienced** – CELCIS - <https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/spotlight/covid19info/>
- **Care Experienced Young People** - <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/>
- **Supports from voluntary and community groups** -EVOC Directory <https://directory.evoc.org.uk/>
- **Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy** Parent and Carer Helpline Tel. 07866848453 Monday to Friday (9am to 12pm)

