

Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

What you need to know

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is going to affect daily life, as the government and the NHS take necessary steps to manage the pandemic, reduce transmission and treat those who need medical attention.

Regardless of their age, this may be a difficult time for children and young people. Some may react immediately, while others may show signs of difficulty later on.

How a child or young person reacts can vary according to their age, how they understand information and communicate, their previous experiences, and how they typically cope with stress. Adverse reactions may include thinking about their health or that of family and friends, fear, avoidance, problems sleeping, or physical symptoms such as stomach ache.

During this time, it's important that you support and take care of your family's mental health – there are lots of things you can do, and additional support is available if you need it.

Please see below a selection of tips for parents and carers while supporting students at home:

- 1) Create and stick to a timetable or routine. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in Pyjamas !
- 2) Be realistic about what you can do.
- 3) Involve your children in setting the timetable where possible. It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership.
- 4) Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible. If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible.
- 5) If you have more than 1 child at home, consider combining their timetables. For example, they might exercise and do Maths together.
- 6) Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over.
- 7) Stick the timetable up on the wall so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day.
- 8) Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life.

9) Make time for exercise and breaks throughout the day. E.g. You can start each morning with a PE lesson at 9am with Joe Wicks

10) If you have a garden, use it regularly. If you don't, try to get out once a day as permitted by the government (households can be together outdoors but 2 meters apart from others).

11) Get your children to write in a diary what they did each day – this can be a clear sign that the 'school' day has ended.

12) Where you have more freedom in the timetable, make time for other activities. Add some creative time or watch a dance video from Go Noodle to get the heart-rate going.

13) Get your children to write postcards to their grandparents or to pen pals.

14) Accept that they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone – that's ok but you might want to set/agree to some screen time limits.

For more guidance on supporting your mental health and that of your children, please visit <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Stay safe