

Helping children manage in unsettling times.

The novel Coronavirus outbreak has led to a high degree of worry, uncertainty and concern. The issue has been very present in the news, and all adults and children will have some degree of awareness of events so far, and may have had their lives disrupted.

During these times both children and adults can potentially feel anxious and unsure about their safety. Alongside school, parents can help provide opportunities where feelings can be discussed within a safe context, as well as maintaining a sense of normality, routine and calm. Supporting children will enable them to process and manage their feelings and build resilience.

The following suggestions may be helpful:

1. **Reassure children that they are safe:** Children will need to be reassured regularly they are safe, and that adults will faithfully try to keep them safe.
2. **Let children know that it is alright to be upset:** Tell children all feelings are OK, but it is important to still behave in a polite and respectful way to others.
3. **Maintain a normal routine:** Set up a work/leisure/exercise routine for students at home. Make extra time to listen to what your children need to tell you.
4. **Place an emphasis on resilience and strengths:** Focus on the child's skills, in terms of their daily life. Help them see they have many strengths to help them cope if feeling anxious or upset.
5. **Look for opportunities to help others:** Acts of benevolence, charity and humanity help to restore positivity about the world.
6. **Provide opportunities for children to be honest about their feelings:** Sharing worries or feelings of upset with other family members reduces a sense of vulnerability and isolation, raises optimism and self esteem. Checking in with your children to see if they have any worries can help them start these conversations.
7. **Provide opportunities for physical exercise:** Exercise is valuable in developing natural chemicals in the brain to help us cope with feelings such as shock or worry.
8. **Communicate any concerns with school:** If you have any worries or concerns about your child's emotional behaviour please do let the school know. There will be things the school can do to help further.
9. **Look after yourself:** A time of stress can mean less energy and more potential for illness for you, as well as others. So please take care of yourself.

Resources

- **Emphasising and developing resilience and inner resources.** Conveying to students that they have the power to manage difficult times and challenges can help to foster hope and positivity
 - Suitcase of valuables exercise [1](#) [2](#). This exercise helps students/ adults realise that there are positive resources they can call on when they feel anxious or upset.
 - (Yr 11-13) For older students and adults, this [5 minute wellbeing](#) resource is useful for identifying goals and sources of support for the year
- **Mindful resets and relaxation.** Short meditations can be useful to reduce anxiety, and bring adults and students back to the present
 - [The conveyor belt of worries](#) is a 5 minute meditation that helps students if they are ruminating over a current situation.
 - [Sleep tight](#) is a great 6 minute meditation which can help students to go to sleep at night if they are having problems in this area.
 - [‘The spaghetti test’](#) is a 6 minute relaxation meditation where students need to be lying down. It involves tensing and relaxing muscles.
 - (Yr 11-13) [The Solid as a rock meditation](#) is a 9 minute file with a 1 minute introduction. It asks adults and students to visualise themselves as a rock in all 4 seasons emphasising the resilience of the rock remaining. A great one to boost strength and confidence.
 - Drawing sketching and colouring can be relaxing activities for students. Drawing [zentangles](#) is a mindful drawing activity for students who don't like breathing meditation.
- **Promotion of hope.** Hope is associated with higher academic success, good problem solving, creativity stronger friendships and lower levels of depression and anxiety. In times where hope seems challenged its useful to create the conditions for more hope
 - This [article](#) from the Greater Good organisation at the University of Berkeley has 5 suggestions for developing hope in students
- **Emphasising connectedness and relationships** Linking with others helps us to feel safe and secure and gives us the capacity to share thoughts and feelings
 - (Yr 10-13) The 9 minute [Just like me meditation](#) emphasises connectedness and mutual respect for others. It's a paired activity that students may feel some self consciousness doing but it is also a very powerful exercise that helps develop empathy and connectedness with others. (*NB Listen to the meditation first to identify if you think it is suitable for your group*)
- **Promoting safety.** In the current situation, adults and students might feel less safe. School routines will feel very reassuring but there are some other activities that can make adults and students feel more secure
 - [The safe place meditation](#) This 6 minute meditation asks students to visualise a safe place they can go to in their mind whenever they feel worried
- **Sharing feelings** It may be helpful to offer the opportunity should someone want to.
 - Sometimes it's useful to use visual resources such as blobs! [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) and ask students to colour in based on [certain questions](#): This can create an atmosphere where students are more able to share their feelings