



What things may be difficult for your child at the moment?

- Lack/change of routine
- Less parental presence if your child is coming into school as a keyworker child
- Parental wellbeing and financial health
- Lack of 'connection' with school
- Home learning/working
- Unable to access school, clubs, social activities
- Uncertainty
- Unwell family members
- Bereavement

If your child is worried about the current situation, you may have seen a regression in their behaviour, for example:

- Bedwetting
- Needing to sleep in parents bed
- May have become clingy
- Crying more than usual
- Weepy
- Having outbursts and meltdowns
- Refusing to follow instructions
- Not able to think for themselves

These are signs that your child may need to talk through things, and have the opportunity to ask questions if they are concerned. Some children will open up when asked directly how they are feeling, whilst others may prefer a less intense approach, where they have time to talk whilst doing another activity e.g. playing a game, baking, driving in the car.

Talking to Young People About COVID-19

- Although it's tempting to try and protect children from difficult topics, they are more likely to worry when they're kept in the dark. Most children and teenagers will be aware of what is happening but may not have all the facts they need to understand it.
- Take time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that they have. Be led by your child as they may not be that interested or want to know everything all at once. Try to answer any questions honestly but keep things in context, for example "Sadly, some people do die, but the vast majority of people will recover, and children seem to be only mildly affected".
- Reassure them that their own risk is very low but that we all need to 'do our bit' to look after people who might be very unwell. Underline how helpful they are being by following the rules about hygiene and social distancing.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing as a family to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.
- Young children up to about age 7 will need very simple explanations that relate to their own experiences. Explain that, like other germs, Coronavirus can spread between people and make them ill. But because Coronavirus is a new germ that we don't know everything about, we need to take more care and so things might be a bit different for a while.
- Older children will want to know more. They may have heard partial explanations and 'filled in the gaps' themselves with their own ideas, so check what they already think they know about it.
- Teenagers will have a similar capacity to understand what's going on as adults. They will need calm, factual information and opportunities to talk through their worries and disappointments.
- Give children an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Our instinct might be to 'make it all better', but it is normal to feel scared, sad and angry in the face of what's happening. Tell them that what is happening is not normal but that their feelings are.

Tips for Parents of Children Returning to School

- Talk with young about the pandemic using factual language. Monitor their exposure to sensationalised media around the virus.
- You may find your child will have regressed, even older children. For example, they may be coming into your bed at night, wanting to be close by, having more meltdowns, refusing to follow instructions or be unable to think for themselves. This is an anxiety-based response.
- Establish routines—this helps with the transition back to school as it will not be so jarring or dramatic. Where possible follow school timings—snack/lunch time, dressed by leaving for school time, bedtimes, especially in the run up to returning to school. You may wish to do a few trial runs of the school run, showing your children where you will drop them off in the morning, so that they know that you will not be able to come to the classroom with them.
- Have house rules and consistently stick to them. Define consequences. Children feel safer when they know what is expected of them.
- Instil good hygiene habits, washing hands for 20 seconds, sneezing into a tissue and disposing.
- Involve your child with household chores so they feel a sense of achievement and contribution to the family ‘pot’.
- Ensure they have uninterrupted parent/child time—play games, read a book, build a den. This may decrease the clinginess at other times.
- Check in with them how they are feeling and try to model emotional regulation -our children will pick up on our fear and anxiety as they can be incredibly perceptive. In ambiguous situations children look to their parents for how to respond.
- Try to encourage connection with school based peers—Zoom, Facetime, telephone or via online games.
- Praise your children regularly. Positive behaviour is more likely to reoccur if commended. It builds confidence, self-esteem and their sense of self worth.
- Encourage your child to identify positives— you could each name 3 good things that have happened that day, or you could use the app 3 Good Things
- Set goals as a family—collect ideas for activities you want to do as a family post lockdown.
- Spend time being mindfulness— you can use apps available such as Calm, My Breathing Mind and Breathe to Relax for ideas.