

Looking After Our Wellbeing:

A grab pack for parents / carers educating children at home during the COVID-19 response

Psychology and Wellbeing Service

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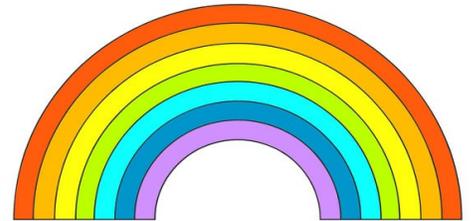
There is a lot of uncertainty around the current **COVID-19** outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and our knowledge about the virus is evolving daily.

Understandably, this can cause feelings of worry and anxiety for everyone. It is therefore important to not only consider your physical health during such challenging times, but also to pay attention to your mental health. It is normal to feel worried, stressed and/or anxious when you are faced with uncertain situations, and the sooner you acknowledge and learn to take care of your mental health and general wellbeing, the healthier and better equipped you will be to cope with the situation we are all facing.

Whilst we all react differently to stressful situations, it is important to remember that how you feel is a **NORMAL** reaction to an **ABNORMAL** event so, whether you are experiencing a little bit of worry, feeling anxious, becoming unsettled by the constant change, loving your new ability to work from home, or enjoying spending more time with family, it's important to take a moment to pause, think and plan what you're doing to look after you, your loved ones and the community around you whilst we are all together in this unique situation.

The media gives us all a lot of information that can help us stay safe and follow the virus guidelines but remember to stick to official sources for the facts. Gov.je also acts as a source of Jersey specific guidance with lots of our most frequently asked questions available for us to review. We've also included more grab packs, just like this one, for you to download if you want to read more on related topics.

This grab pack offers some handy tips to support you if you are a parent/ carer, educating your child/children at home, supporting the wellbeing of your family and thinking about how you can look after yourself too.



During this unique time we are all considering the changes we need to make to keep ourselves and our families safe. Check out our range of wellbeing grab packs online, offering helpful tips on a range of subjects including the importance of sleep, parenting children with ADHD, Mindfulness, wellbeing for children and many more.

In this grab pack:

- The first step: understanding and managing your own personal reaction
- Looking after our children
- Interest checklist for physical distancing
- Resources

The first step: understanding and managing your own personal reaction

We all react differently to stressful situations. How you will be responding to the pandemic will be dependent upon a variety of factors and we need to be mindful at all times that, despite us all being in the same situation, we are all facing different challenges that are personal to each of us.

In particular, you may be dealing with fear and worry about your own health, and the health of your loved ones, or trying to work out how you can juggle working and educating at home. You may also be feeling anxious about possible financial implications in the short and longer term.

When we worry or become anxious about something we may also experience:

- Changes in sleeping (which many of us might experience at this time of year with the change in season and time)
- Changes in eating patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling less resilient, where the little things get a big reaction from you
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Developing Psychosomatic symptoms – i.e. a fear that any symptom may signal that you have COVID-19.

It is important to remember that you are having a **NORMAL** reaction to an **ABNORMAL** event and there are a number of things you can do to take control of how you are feeling and help yourself before you reach for a helpline.

- Separate what is within your control and what is not. Focus on those things you can control – such as keeping good hygiene. This is a time of change so trying to do things the way you've always done them is likely to frustrate you if you don't acknowledge your actions and reactions also need to be different.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths; try to eat healthily and stay hydrated, exercise, get plenty of sleep and think about your mental health.

- Take regular breaks. This applies to almost everything you do. Take breaks from watching reports on the virus – including limiting social media. Hearing about it repeatedly can fuel anxiety and worry, particularly if you haven't yet made your plan of how you're looking after yourself.
- Make time to focus on activities you enjoy, whilst acknowledging any restrictions that are upon us all.
- Maintain contacts with others, particularly if they are a positive influence, and try to talk with people you trust about how you are feeling. It is likely that these will be shared worries. Try to avoid exacerbating each other's anxieties by keeping to the facts, as we know them, and be mindful not to get caught up in negative thought patterns.
- Find ways to let off steam (this does not include throwing your laptop through the window because the internet speed is too slow if you are working from home! – stay positive) - use humour and make an effort to notice any positive signs or messages e.g. support and acts of kindness shown by others.
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.

Taking care of your mental health and checking in on others is something that we can all do, and we need to remember that by looking after our own mental health, we'll be best placed to look after our children and others around us too. The Mental Health Foundation outlines 10 ways in which to look after your mental health (many of which are covered throughout this grab pack) and the trick is to think about which ways appeal to you, your personality and your lifestyle. These include keeping active, eating well, drinking sensibly, keeping in touch, caring for others, accepting who you are, doing something you're good at, taking a break, asking for help and sharing your feelings.

Time is precious but try to give some thought to the little things like taking breaks and eating right and think about planning your days or weeks to include something from each of the following ('5 ways to wellbeing', developed by NEF):

BE ACTIVE

Try to make sure that you and your family get regular exercise every day. YouTube has lots of exercise videos for kids and adults. Get children involved in planning their own 'indoor PE'.

If current government advice permits, try to get outside once a day either into your garden if you have one or in a place where there are few people. If you can't go out, open the windows for some fresh air and take some time to look at the world outside.

TAKE NOTICE

Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what's happening in the here and now in your family. Notice and appreciate the small things.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing.

There's lots of good mindfulness apps to try, but if that's not for you, just getting into something you enjoy e.g. cooking, drawing etc. and really focussing on it can be just as good.

CONNECT

Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Social distancing is going to make that trickier, but we're lucky enough to have technology to help us out. Think physical distancing, but social connections.

Social media is great, but if you can, try to have phone calls or even video calls. Arrange to FaceTime/Skype a friend for coffee, phone relatives more often than usual.

Whilst it can be helpful to share worries, try to find other things to talk about too.

GIVE

Research tells us that giving back to our community helps people to feel valuable and makes us happier. We might not be able to contribute to our community in our usual way, but many people will still be able to find ways to give back.

Lots of community groups are setting up schemes that aim to help vulnerable people at this difficult time. If you want to get involved, check out local social media for ideas.

Many of us will not be in a position to offer practical support. We can still offer mutual support to friends and family by checking in with them regularly.

KEEP LEARNING

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement.

Whilst we're busy learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts and worries.

Social-distancing will bring new challenges, but it will give many of us the time to start a new hobby or learn about an area that we've always been interested in.

The information we've covered so far is useful to everyone wanting to manage their lifestyle and make sense of the changes we are all going through. It should help keep your normal feelings of anxiety, worry and stress at sensible levels and enable us to more effectively manage anxiety, stress and worry at more challenging parts of the day.

Once you've followed some of the guidance in this grab pack, you may still feel that there are times when your anxiety levels stop you from doing something you want to do or make you feel uncomfortable. If this is you, then remember there are a variety of agencies and helplines you can call to get some support with developing this skill, and asking for help is one of the recommended ways of looking after your own mental health. You may also want to consider learning a little more about anxiety and trialling a few new management techniques.

Looking after our children

There are a lot of fun videos and images emerging on the internet of people sharing the challenges of parents/carers now attempting to home-school, and a new found respect for the role of our educators who actually do this for a living, and with more than one or two children in the room at any given time! If you are in this situation, following work set by your child's school, and reminding yourself of what parenthesis or an expanding noun phrase is, then read on for some tips on how to survive and support your child/children now that you've considered the importance of looking after yourself.

For the most part, children will need what they've always needed; love, attention and opportunities to learn and play. No one is expecting you to be a fully qualified teacher overnight so your aim needs to be on creating a safe, fun space at home, engaging in some learning and giving yourself permission that you are doing what you can and that's enough.

Example of a daily routine

45 mins Academic learning

45 mins Creative Activities

45 mins Exercise

Have lunch

Downtime

45 mins Academic learning

45 mins Help around the house

Free time

Have dinner

Contact family and friends - phone, Facetime, email

Free time

Get ready for bed

Try and keep to a structure and routine that suits you. Keep bedtime and morning routines close to existing ones to promote a sense of normality that children will find reassuring. Encouraging them to get up and dressed during the week will help maintain some difference between weekdays and weekends.

There are examples of suggested timetables on the internet and often included in packs from our schools. These are shared as a guide but may be helpful in terms of thinking about how to maintain some structure and routine throughout days at home. Remember to intersperse activities with breaks, and don't forget healthy snacks and drinks...for yourself as well as the kids!

Keep boundaries firm and make it clear that you expect the same standards of behaviour as usual. Boundaries show that adults are still in control and taking care of them, which helps children to feel safe.

Make sure they get some time to burn off energy every day. Younger children will enjoy assault courses, discos etc. Older children and teens might respond better to fitness videos.

Expect children to do some learning every day. In the longer-term schools are likely to provide opportunities for online learning. In the short term, or as extra activities there are a wealth of helpful websites, many of which they will be able to access independently. Continuing with their learning helps promote a sense of normality and purpose as well as keeping them up to date for when they are back at school.

Find opportunities for them to interact with their friends remotely. For tweens and teens, contact with their peers is especially important. Technology provides lots of opportunities for older children to connect, chat and game together. But be wary of giving unsupervised access to platforms that you would not normally allow your child onto; the internet still poses the same risks as in normal times.

Balance screen time with other activities. Challenge children to learn new skills that don't involve screens e.g. tying shoe laces, juggling, baking. Older children might want to set their own goals.

Give children opportunities to have a say in what will be happening. They may have had a lot of their freedoms and choices removed for a while and may feel powerless or angry. Older children and teenagers will be more able to understand the risks in too much screen time, too little sleep, inactivity etc. They are more likely to 'buy in' to new rules and routines if they feel that they have a voice. Family meetings where children and adults problem-solve together can be helpful for this. (<https://bristolchildparentsupport.co.uk/ready-family-meetings/>)

Consider introducing a reward system into learning time. Make sure it's positive i.e. what you pay attention to is what you get more of! Discuss with your child/children, how this reward system could look and what behaviours/work/achievements are going to be rewarded. Once you've agreed, make sure they can earn agreed rewards quickly to get them invested in the system and chat about what agreed rewards might look like e.g. Finishing a task on time or sitting to work without a reminder might earn some baking time together, a favourite DVD to watch on a Friday afternoon or some time on the internet. You can get more creative if you write down all agreed rewards on separate pieces of paper and put these in a jar to pick out as a surprise when the reward is earned.

Talk with your child/children about the 5 ways to wellbeing, above, and discuss how each of you are working towards fitting them into your day/week. You might want to use the interest checklist below to get started.



Interest checklist for physical distancing

Put a tick next to the activities you are doing and a star next to the ones that interest you. Alternatively, use your initials to indicate the activities each member of your household are engaged in and create a family checklist.

Playing computer games		Jigsaws		Gardening / houseplants	
Lego / model building		Watching TV or YouTube		Cooking / baking	
Using the internet / emailing		Playing chess / other Board games		Doing puzzles (e.g. crosswords, Sudoku)	
Playing cards		Collecting		Watch a funny video	
Listening to music		Listening to the radio or podcast		Other play...	
Exercising at home / aerobics / circuits		Walking		Jogging	
Cycling		Dancing		Yoga / Pilates	
Wii Fit / Xbox Kinect		Rhythm – bouncing / skipping		Cleaning / sorting	
Meditation / mindfulness		Massage / beauty treatments (e.g. nails)		Relaxation techniques	
Soak in a bath		Savour a meal		Stretching / tai chi / qi gong	
Sewing / knitting / crochet		Writing stories / poetry		Singing	
Playing a musical instrument		Painting / drawing / chalking		Photography	
Colouring		Origami		Clay / Play-do / slime	
Scrapbooking		Pebble painting		Hama beads	
Decorating / DIY		Restoring / upcycling		Other crafts	
Reading a book or magazine		Writing in a diary		Learning a foreign language	
Start a blog		Research topic online		Set a goal	
Make a to do list		Read inspirational quotes		Do schoolwork	
Make a gratitude list		Read a joke book		Audio book	
Social media		Caring for a pet		Caring for family member	
Writing letters / emails		Dog walking		Call a friend or FaceTime	
Religious practice		Helping out around the house		Do something kind	
Other...		Other...		Other...	

Another resource to identify and explore activity ideas can be found at <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

Resources



Free home learning resources: includes activities and lesson plans

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search?term=school+closure>

<https://www.khanacademy.org>

<https://www.nessy.com>

Book printables: <https://dianealber.com/printables/>

Suggestions for younger children
(Please click on the links below)

[5 days of Happiness for Children](#)

[Star breathing techniques](#)

[Kids Yoga](#)

[Just dance- dance clips for children](#)

[cbeebies](#)

[Stories and drama](#)

[Games](#)

[For movement and mindfulness](#)

[Fun educational games for kids aged 3-11](#)

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables> - A short book about Coronavirus for children under 7

Support for Parents/Carers
(Please click on the links below)

[How to talk to children about the Corona Virus.](#)

[Managing our Mental Health & Staying Well during a Virus](#)

[Outbreak](#)

[ELSA 14 day self-isolation fun activities](#)

Meaningful May - <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/meaningful-may>

[Supporting Kids during the COVID-19](#)

Family Action

Telephone: 0808 802 6666

Text message: 07537 404 282

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/familyline/>

The Family Line service supports people who are dealing with family pressures in a new and innovative way by using a network of volunteers from across the country to support family members over the age of 18 through telephone calls, email, web chat and text message.

Family Lives (previously Parentline)

Call: 0808 800 2222

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/>

Family Lives offers a confidential and free helpline service for families in England and Wales (previously known as Parentline). for emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life. The helpline service is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday.

Gingerbread

Single Parent Helpline: 0808 802 0925

gingerbread.org.uk

One Parent Families/Gingerbread is the leading national charity working to help lone parents and their children.

Grandparents Plus

Call: 0300 123 7015

grandparentsplus.org.uk

Grandparents Plus is the only national charity (England and Wales) dedicated to supporting kinship carers - grandparents and other relatives raising children who aren't able to live with their parents.

Suggestions for older children and young people (Please click on the links below)

[5 Day Happiness Challenge for older children](#)

Meaningful May - <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/meaningful-may>

[For movement and mindfulness](#)

Newsround video: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366?fbclid=IwAR3CyZq5rzXVoyGCgWjjpx6YqoetuZ1tP16y7wMjUR6uwgWyhRmf0aFTrAs> - Drs Chris and Xand explain what's happening

www.kooth.com

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.keep-your-head.com

Support for children and young people with autism / social communication difficulties

This website contains useful information on written conversations: <https://usevisualstrategies.com/autism-coronavirus-helping-students-understand/>

This website has a good social story to help younger children understand more about the coronavirus, (please note copyright at the bottom of the page): <https://theautismeducator.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-1-1.pdf>

And this site has a social story written by Carol Gray who created and devised the original Social Stories™ and which might appeal to older students: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf> School Closure – Social Story See Appendix 6- can be adapted to suit other changes if not school related.



Helpful resources for talking to children about Coronavirus

Resources for children and young people with additional needs:

<https://theautismeducator.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus> - Contains a link to the most up to date version of their “Easy Read” for young people and adults with learning difficulties

Well-being and mindfulness activities (please click on the links below)

[Jersey's very own Stay Home Gorillas! Design your own Gorilla to display in your window at home.](#)

[30 different prompts to do something throughout April. This will help to keep your child busy and also to help their wellbeing.](#)

[Why not try a 7 day Family Gratitude Challenge?](#)

[Zentangling! This is a resource for children to have a go at tangling \(doodling\). It is a fab activity to do and brings a real sense of mindfulness.](#)

[How about a Mindfulness Rainbow Walk. Be here now and notice the colours around you! Go for a walk with your children and notice the colours. They can note things they see in each colour of the rainbow.](#)

[Many children absolutely love doing challenges. This is a Mindfulness one. It only takes 5 days!](#)

