

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS DURING LOCKDOWN

QUICK SUGGESTIONS

Limit or *turn off* the radio and TV
Keep it simple and don't worry too much about formal 'learning'
Be *forgiving and compassionate* towards yourself and your kids, this is a global pandemic and there is no 'normal'

Children may respond in different ways. Some may be very interested and ask many questions, others may seem to 'just get on with it'. Young children don't usually express how they feel using words, their natural language is play and creativity, so it's a good to *spend more time playing* and noticing any themes or patterns that emerge. Older children will need to play too.

TIPS FOR PLAYING WITH YOUR CHILD

- Allow them to *take the lead*, they decide what to do, they make the decisions (notice that this can feel hard!)
- Ask *open questions* or comment on what they are doing eg. 'Ah, the green glitter', 'What happens next?', 'Tell me more'
- Be *playful and curious*, notice what is happening in the play without trying to change or influence it
- Encourage *laughter and silliness* as this releases oxytocin and endorphins in the brain which helps to regulate stress
- Don't be surprised at themes that may come up, for more on this [check here](#)

Even if children don't seem affected, they are likely to be tuning in to how adults around them are feeling. *Nurturing and validating* experiences are needed eg. cuddles, cosy times, naming feelings. It's important to recognise that they may show their feelings through minor upsets, tantrums or anxieties around bedtime and to offer extra *acceptance and care* if this happens. Older children may exhibit these behaviours too and that's a normal reaction to stress, they need adults to comfort and understand their big feelings (even if it something that seems trivial). [Click here](#) for free resources around building healthy relationships.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

There are many resources to choose from. These are my favourites. Take the lead from your child, if they want to know more then tell them but if they don't then that's ok too.

[A guide](#) from Aha Parenting with many helpful ideas

[A story](#) with a clear and simple format

[A video](#) to help younger children

[An infographic](#) which may help older children to understand social distancing

[A book](#) with more detail

One of the best ways to help kids with their feelings and behaviour is to make sure that you feel regulated, nourished and supported which is of course challenging when we don't have the usual resources to turn to. [Self-compassion](#) is important here, and taking time to tune in to how you are feeling, it is a time of global upheaval so 'business as usual' is not to be expected. [Check here](#) to understand more about possible reactions that you or family members may experience.

ROUTINE AND STRUCTURE

During times when there are restrictions on what we can do, it's easy to feel helpless which can create panic and anxiety. *Asking children to be involved* in planning out family activities helps them to feel empowered and motivated, it supports them in developing resilience.

Try the '[Healthy Mind Platter](#)' as a way of developing different routines for each day, and ask for their input in making decisions.

When *conflict* arises develop a consistent strategy for approaching it. This [conflict resolution](#) suggestion might be helpful. It might feel exhausting to go through a long procedure but it feels reassuring for everyone and it is less time consuming than temper tantrums which drag on for hours.

RELAXATION AND CREATIVITY

[Daily classical music](#), chosen to help us to navigate a range of feelings. Try doodling or drawing with your kids as you listen and then gently asking about feelings or images that came up

Try [kids yoga](#) or [meditation](#). Some will love this, some will not respond, go with what works for your family

Dr Karen Treisman has several helpful [Relaxation tools](#)

IT'S OK TO HAVE FEELINGS

Acknowledge and accept all feelings eg there may be confusion or sadness over missing friends and family, angry outbursts could happen, anxiety or worry would be normal. Don't try to cheer them up or talk them out of their feelings but be alongside sharing in their experience. Remember that young children are unlikely to tell you exactly why they have the feelings and that's ok.

[The invisible string](#) – a book to support children in understanding the bond of love between people even when they are separated

[Teenie Weenie in a too big world](#) – a book for children who are worried, the message is that when there is a 'together' around then life is easier. This book works well for older and younger children