**Psychological support for children and parents coping in the time of COVID-19**

**Tips for conversations about COVID-19 with children and young people:**

**Ease your own anxiety first.** Children/young people will follow their parent’s example. So, remain informed by reliable sources and know when to ‘switch off’ from news and social media.

**Learn what the child/young person knows already**. This will inform you as to what information you need to share with them.

**Have the conversation promptly**. Inform your child about Coronavirus in an age appropriate way and explain the reasoning for changes in daily life e.g. social distancing. However, with younger children it may be more useful to reinforce what to do e.g. wash your hands whilst singing ‘Happy Birthday’ twice.

**Be understanding of their concerns and remain empathetic**. Validate the child/young person’s concerns and don’t dismiss them. Help to mitigate their concerns by providing reassurance.

**Provide fact-based information and encourage good hygiene**. Sticking to the facts will help to minimise any confusion and this will reinforce the reasoning behind good hygiene.

**Watch your child's stress levels moving forward**. Changes in a child/young person’s behaviour may be as a result of difficulties in expressing their concerns verbally. A tip for dealing with this is remaining present and engaged during conversations and see what the child/young person may be trying to tell you. E.g. are they expressing frustration/ fear/ withdrawing?

**Sources: British Psychological Society; verywellmind**

**Support for Parents**

**Top tips for self-isolation with your family (adapted from an article on BBC news)**

Our children respond so much to ourselves and our leadership. Especially now when things are being so disrupted. As a parent the best thing to focus on before you go down rabbit holes looking for curriculum is to think about how to support yourself first because you are that bedrock. It’s not just the children who may be impacted parents too could find it a challenge. When people are faced with uncertainty or worry, having some certainties, for example through a bit of structure, could really help:

Children and adults really thrive on predictability, especially when life is changing around them, it’s about getting a balance - having a structure and integrating some fun!

You don’t have to be in school to learn!

Create a daily schedule for school-age children, children will love being involved in this and it will give them some control

Creating weekly or daily activities and then read the plan out or “stick it on the wall”.

Distinguish weekdays and weekends and have a balance between calm vs active activities (similar to school).

Have a choice of activities for children to choose from. Creative time, artwork, time in the garden, digging and getting muddy, planting bulbs etc. Focus on ticking off tasks each day.

Display your arts and crafts in a window for others to see when they are walking past.

Give children jobs to do so that they feel part of the routine – get them to wash the car and help them earn pocket money.

Accept they are going to watch telly and DVD’s because we all do...and we all need it!

Any schedule should be more like a “flow” - rather than something strict.

A lot of siblings will not be used to being together all day, and that’s a lovely opportunity to build and strengthen your family relationships - but it will come with some bumps in the road.

Maybe Wednesdays have a family film afternoon. Or give teenagers some private time to Skype or WhatsApp their friends 

Contact with the outside world is also vital, as well as exercise, such as going for a walk where you won't bump into anyone. If you are self-isolating after having symptoms, the NHS advises not going for a walk.

**For Parent’s Sanity!!**

Even just opening a window and taking 10 deep breaths, doing a free three-minute meditation or writing down 3 things you’re grateful for.

Limit how much news you’re taking in each day e.g. morning news might be better than watching it before bed!

This is a time we need to prepare for our houses to be a bit messier. Having children about all day, it’s going to get messy.









