

# COVID-19

- The COVID 19 pandemic is affecting our daily lives and is having a huge impact on most people. It can lead us to experience, loss of safety, unpredictability, and loss of connection with friends, family and loved ones, which can affect our mental health and wellbeing
- Anxiety, worry, anger and fear are normal responses to the situation we are facing. You are not alone in feeling this way; many others are feeling this way too! At the same time, many people are feeling calm and going about their lives enjoying less traffic, less commuting and more time outdoors and online! Both responses are understandable responses.
- You and your family will be experiencing changes to life as you normally know it.

Examples might be:

- not being able to engage in usual activities
- not meeting with friends and family
- school closures
- changes to exams
- job losses or changes
- spending long periods of time with your family, that you may not be used to.

As we try to adjust to these changes, it's not uncommon for there to be a build-up of frustration and anxiety, which can lead to tempers fraying. Or not! Some people are coping just fine and that's normal too! That can add to our annoyance and frustration if we are struggling, but it's important to remember that, although we are all going through this together, we are all in individual situations so it will impact us differently. We are where we are and it is what it is! There is no point wasting energy on wishing our situation was different!

- You may have concerns about grandparents, older relatives, and family or friends with underlying health conditions. It's normal to feel unsettled, anxious, upset and fearful. Equally, it's normal to be taking this in your stride, to be doing what you can to help but not worrying unduly.
- You may have felt fine about COVID 19 at first but maybe now you are finding it more difficult. There are several things you may notice: changes in your appetite, sleep disturbance, stomach aches, tense muscles, nausea, headaches, difficulties relaxing or concentrating. Sometimes our bodies start telling us that we're anxious without it being obvious to us!

- Sometimes people find themselves turning to drugs or alcohol to try and manage feelings of distress. Some people might return to smoking who have stopped or increase their smoking. Or they might self-harm. If any of these are happening to you, it is important to ask for help. (See below for some suggestions)
- If you are worried that you or someone you know has COVID-19, you can find out more information at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

***Do remind yourself that the current situation with COVID-19 will not last forever: it will eventually pass!***

### **Supporting your physical and mental health**

Right now, it's especially important you take time to look after yourself. There are lots of things you can do to support yourself:

- There is currently a lot of news and information circling on COVID 19. If you find reading or watching the news is causing you to feel increasingly anxious and worried, try limiting the amount of time you spend reading information on social media or watching the news. Be very careful that your news source is a reliable one. There's a lot of rumour and misinformation out there.
- Here's a very funny video to remind us of that!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxDKW75uelU>

You could stop watching it or reading news completely! You only really need to know when government guidelines change and it's amazing how quickly that information spreads, even if you're not watching or reading the news!

- Adapt and create new routines. Structure days, plan regular meal times, have regular times for waking up and going to bed, school work, breaks, free time and exercise.
- Keep connected with friends and family by phone or internet, or in the permitted small groups outside the home.
- Set aside time to relax. Find relaxing things that you enjoy, whether it's relaxation exercises, yoga, Mindfulness, meditation, taking hot baths or shower or just finding a private place in the house where you can have time alone.
- Make sure you have a balance between being online and being offline.
- Keep active. Schedule regular exercise, preferably outside – it's been shown to be better for our mental wellbeing eg. walking, jogging, bike rides, gardening. But if you can't exercise outside, better to exercise inside than not at all!
- Get plenty of sleep, eat well and stay hydrated (If you eat rubbish, you will feel rubbish!)
- Plan activities that you enjoy eg. painting, drawing, singing, dancing, writing, playing games, puzzles, walking, gardening, fishing, watching TV etc
- Practise gratitude. You can increase positive feelings by taking time each day to notice what things you are thankful for and jot them down in a journal e.g. thankful for sunny weather, the food you have eaten for lunch or what someone has done for you. This may sound really

twee but it really does help. Our thought patterns develop through repetition. If we practise being grateful, it really will help us to think in more positive ways. The alternative is teaching ourselves to be really miserable and grumpy, by repeatedly thinking miserable, grumpy thoughts. The choice is ours!

- When we achieve something, we often feel good, so plan things that give you a sense of achievement such as cooking a meal on your own or with your family, tidying your room (yes, really!!! It can be really therapeutic!), gardening (weeding can be very satisfying, just check which are the weeds first!), making something or even just completing your homework really well!
- Talk honestly to someone you can trust, a friend, relative, family member or teacher or get in touch with us here on the counselling team. Share how you are feeling, your worries and concerns, and try to make sense of what is happening. We have had a number of 'one-off' chats with boys since lockdown. You don't have to sign up for a whole series of sessions! See below for contact details for counselling.
- For further ideas on strategies that you can use to support your mental health and wellbeing, take a look at the Anna Freud Centre self-care resources page:
- <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

### Asking for help

It's important to remember if you are feeling really overwhelmed or feel you would like support during this time to discuss your concerns and worries, there are a few ways you can do this:

- If you would like the opportunity to speak to a school counsellor, you can email Meg Harper (Head of Counselling) at [m.harper@warwickschool.org](mailto:m.harper@warwickschool.org) and arrange to come along for counselling. This would be with either Meg or with Gemma King.
- If you are concerned about your physical symptoms, speak to your parents about consulting your GP or make an appointment yourself. You can do that at any age. Here is a link to some useful information about that:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/getting-help/visiting-your-doctor/#:~:text=Anyone%20can%20make%20an%20appointment,sure%20that%20you're%20safe.>

- You may wish to speak to someone from your own faith community.

### Websites and information on how to support your mental wellbeing during COVID-19

#### Looking after each other and ourselves (pdf)

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11242/looking-after-each-other-ourselves-final.pdf>

#### A children's guide to COVID 19

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/cco-childrens-guide-to-coronavirus.pdf>

- MIND -Coronavirus and your wellbeing  
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse2a472>

## Illness or bereavement due to COVID-19

If you have a loved one that has become very ill or has sadly died due to COVID-19, you may be looking for help and support during this difficult time. Below there are some resources and websites that you may find helpful.

However, if you feel it would be helpful to talk to someone in school you can arrange to talk to a school counsellor.

### Is someone you love very ill?

#### Ideas to help you stay connected when you can't visit

It can be so hard when someone you love is seriously ill and you can't visit them. Even though they are surrounded by people who are caring gently and kindly for them, it can be very tough to be apart from them. Here are some ways that you can feel closer together, and look after yourself. Tick the ones you feel like trying, and keep this as a reminder.

- Listen to music that they like or eat their favourite food
- Write them a letter or card, or draw them a picture and send it by phone
- Send them something to hug and think of me
- Make sure I look after myself by exercising, eating well and getting enough sleep
- Ask questions about what is happening even if people get upset. I need the facts to understand, and talking about it will help me
- Share with others if I start to think I am to blame
- Tell people what helps me feel better and keeps me feeling safe
- Keep something that reminds me of them with me in my pocket or in a special place
- Record them a message telling them how much I love them, or things about my day. Make a recording of the sounds of home
- Ask ..... for help and support whenever I need it.
- Stay connected with friends and family even though we have to be apart
- Find ways of expressing my feelings by writing, drawing, music or exercise
- Ask for any extra help I might need with school work, especially while schools are closed
- I'm going to try .....

Published by CBN at the National Children's Bureau reg. charity 258825, to help young people during the COVID19 outbreak  
For more ideas and local and national support organisations, email [cbn@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cbn@ncb.org.uk)



### Has someone important to you died?

#### Ideas to help you in your grief

People cope in all sorts of ways when someone dies. It can be hard to know what to do to get through this time, especially while we have to be apart from family and friends. Here are some suggestions from other bereaved young people about things you could do. Tick the ones you think would help at the moment, and keep it as a reminder.

- Tell people what helps me feel better and keeps me feeling safe
- Remind myself that, like the seasons, things will change
- Ask if I can keep something that belonged to them
- Look after myself and allow time for sleeping, eating resting, thinking and relaxing
- Start a memory box or book to help remember them
- Ask questions about what happened even if people get upset. I need the facts to understand, and talking about it will help me
- Share with others if I start to think I am to blame
- Remind myself I'm not going crazy. My sleeping, eating, thinking, memory, concentrating & motivation will be up and down
- Laugh and have fun without feeling bad about it
- Talk to the person who died in my imagination or write them a letter. This may help me say things I never got the chance to say, and to stay feeling connected to them
- Ask ..... for help and support whenever I need it
- Stay connected with friends and family even though we have to be apart
- Find ways of expressing my feelings by writing, drawing, music or exercise
- Ask for any extra help I might need with school work, especially while schools are closed
- I'm going to try .....

With thanks to young people and Seasons for Growth trainers at the Notre Dame Centre in Glasgow.  
Published by the Childhood Bereavement Network at the National Children's Bureau reg. charity 258825  
For more ideas and local and national support organisations, visit [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)




- COVID-19 supporting bereaved children and young people.

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>

- Sudden – supporting people after sudden death including COVID-19.

<http://www.suddendeath.org/covid-19-bereavement/help-after-covid-19-bereavement>

- The Loss Foundation is the only UK charity dedicated solely to providing bereavement support following the loss of a loved one to cancer, whether that be spouses, family members, friends or colleagues. They also offer specific Covid-19 loss support.

<https://thelossfoundation.org/>

Meg Harper, Head of Counselling

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