



Children's Mental Health

8 WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN STRUGGLING DURING LOCKDOWN

1



Know how to spot the signs

If you notice your child is becoming withdrawn, that there's been a change in sleeping or eating habits, if they seem to lack confidence or get upset, it might be a sign they're struggling.



2



Talk to your child

If you spot signs your child might be struggling, it's important to talk to them. Keep talking and trying to communicate in any way you can – hugging, listening to them, texting them.



3



Create structure and routine

Try introducing a rota or loose timetable that includes fun things you're doing during the week. This can help to create a feeling of stability, which can alleviate anxiety.



4



Give children a sense of control through information

Look online with your children to find useful information and resources that help children feel they have control.



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5

Keep children learning



Using fun and creative ways at home to learn alongside continued access to educational opportunities will support your children's development.



6

Limit screen time and mix up activities



As most socialising moves online, it's important to have conversations on how an increase in screen time can have an impact on everyone's mental health and self-esteem.



7

Help your child manage stress



If you spot signs your child might be struggling, it's important to talk to them. Keep talking and trying to communicate in any way you can – hugging, listening to them, texting them, etc.



8

Expressing feelings doesn't have to be face-to-face



Children might find it easier writing their thoughts down, so the whole family could do this and put them in a 'feelings box' and then talk about their good, sad or difficult feelings at the end of the day.



10 Things to Say instead of Stop Crying



1. It's ok to be sad

2. This is really hard for you

3. I'm here with you

4. Tell me about it

5. I hear you

6. That was really scary, sad, etc.

7. I will help you work it out

8. I'm listening

9. I hear that you need space.

I want to be here for you.

I'll stay close so you can find me when you're ready.

10. It doesn't feel fair

THE EMOTIONAL CUP

Some ways that children deal with having an empty cup:

- Steal from other people's cups
- Misbehave to get your attention and show that they need a refill
- Seem to have bottomless cups, or need constant 'topping off'
- Can't sit still for refills or actively refuse them
- Bounce off the walls when they approach 'empty'
- Think they have to fight or compete for every refill

What fills a child's cup:

- Play
- Friendship
- One-on-one time
- Love and affection
- Connection
- Succeeding
- Doing what they love



What empties a child's cup:

- Stress and strain
- Rejection by peers
- Loneliness and isolation
- Yelling and punishment
- Failing
- Fatigue
- Doing what they hate



Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry



Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty



Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

THE STRESS RELIEF GIRAFFE



OUT OF
CONTROL

SCARED OF
LOSING
CONTROL

NERVOUS

UNSURE

CALM

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN DO:

- Calm breathing exercises
- Use visualisation meditation techniques
- Body tightening exercises (progressive muscle relaxation)
- Sigh to become fully present in the moment
- Practice music therapy
- Change location / surroundings
- Use a stress ball / fidget toy
- Give themselves a 10-second hug to boost their mood
- Colour, draw, write, craft, etc.
- Practice positive self-talk / words of affirmation
- Exercise
- Go outside
- Play
- Hydrate with water



The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust
Depression – let's get talking

Comforting at a distance

When we can't give physical comfort, we
can still do a lot:

Use
**comforting
language** and
tone of voice -
reinforce school
is a **safe and
happy place**

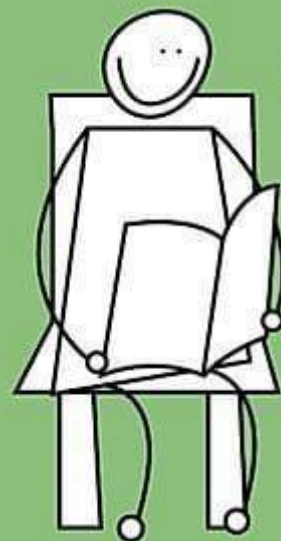
Use
**positive and
open gestures**
with lots of
smiles

Validate
their feelings
– **reassure** and
let them know
it's **ok to have
worries**

**Share a
virtual tour** so
families know
what is different...
and what stays
the same!

Use
play to
stimulate and
re-establish
friendships

Remember:
small things =
big difference





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Helping your child back to school

Plan
ahead
together -
try using
pictures...

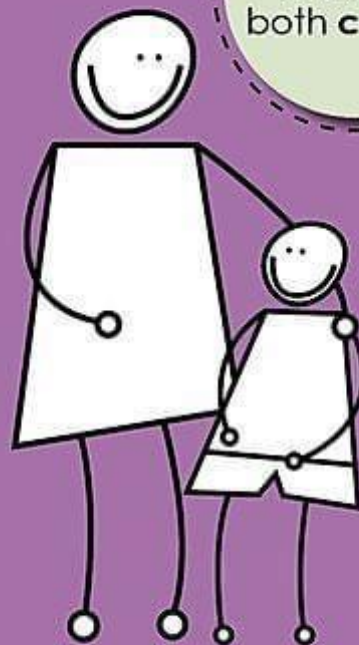
...the
**morning
routine**, their
uniform, the
**journey to
school**

Focus on
what you
both **can** do

**Not
everything
will be different** -
the staff, building
and some
routines will still
be familiar

**Give
praise**
when they
talk about a
worry

**It's OK to
feel worried**
about change -
let them know
that!



EMERGENCY CARE WALL

for sadness

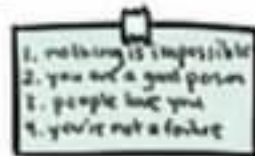


for loneliness



best friend's
phone #

for self-doubt



list of reasons
why you can

for anger



calming
music

for worry



comfort
blanket

for other



free
hug

stress
ball

bear

fav.
books

TYPES OF SELF-CARE



PHYSICAL

Sleep
Stretching
Walking
Physical release
Healthy food
Yoga
Rest



EMOTIONAL

Stress management
Emotional maturity
Forgiveness
Compassion
Kindness



SOCIAL

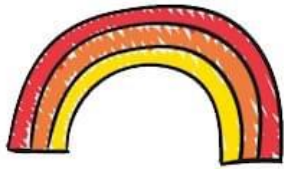
Boundaries
Support systems
Positive social media
Communication
Time together
Ask for help



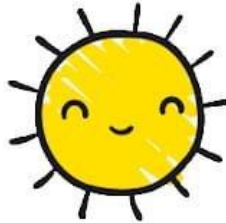
SPIRITUAL

Time alone
Meditation
Yoga
Connection
Nature
Journaling
Sacred space

Self-Care & Mental Health for Kids



Share your own feelings to encourage self-awareness.



Set aside time for low-stress or solo activities.



Find social groups that help them feel like they belong.



Focus on articulating feelings.
"I am angry."
"I am sad."

Encourage journaling and diaries.



Practice self-care for yourself to set the standard.

Encourage your child to focus on the moment.



Establish a self-care routine.



Recognize toxic stress events.

BlessingManifesting

Cultivate interests and hobbies.

STRUCTURE & ROUTINE

When things are uncertain, this leads to anxiety. Young people with Speech, Language & Communication in particular require a more concrete and predictable world to feel secure. You can decrease the uncertainty and increase the feeling of security by creating structure and routine for them.



BUILD STRUCTURE INTO DAILY ROUTINE

You want your daily routine to be as structured and predictable as possible. This reduces anxiety. Regular routines that are already in place such as bed times should be continued.



USE A VISUAL SCHEDULE

Try to use visual schedules so they can see what's coming up next. These plot a route through the day for them, creating predictability.



KEEP ROUTINE HABITS THE SAME

Keep your familiar routines consistent between days. For example, going for a walk at the same time each day, or following the same route on the walk.



MANAGE TRANSITIONS

Switching from one activity to the next can be challenging. Make it easier by giving reminders that things are coming to an end and others are beginning. You can use a Now/Next board, or a timer to help prepare for the change.



Support your child's wellbeing while schools are closed

With schools closing across the UK, most children will be at home full time. As parents/carers you will inevitably be concerned about the effect this may have on your child's development, their physical and mental health, as well as your family's wellbeing.

- 1 Establish a daily routine.** Routines provide reassuring structure and purpose. Include a mix of learning, creative, physical, relaxation and 'electronics' time. Help your child make a visual timetable so everyone understands the plan.
- 2 Make time for physical activity.** Encourage your child outside and rediscover garden games. If you can't get outside, suggest your child makes an indoor obstacle course. There are lots of resources available on the BBC, ITV and YouTube.
- 3 Work on personal care skills.** Identify self-care tasks that your child would like to do more independently, for example tying shoelaces or getting dressed.
- 4 Develop life skills.** Help your child learn how to prepare their lunch, use a washing machine or change their bedsheets. Older children could complete an online First Aid course or start to learn another language.
- 5 Create a suitable study space.** Ideally your child should have an appropriately sized chair and table, but if they must use adult furniture ensure they can sit with feet firmly planted and their shoulders relaxed.
- 6 Teach your child to type.** Typing is a valuable skill for education, social communication and for the workplace.
- 7 Rediscover creative activities** such as playdough, junk modelling, Lego and origami.
- 8 Spend social time together as a family.** Play board games, watch a film or make a cake. Schedule mealtimes together and commit to them.
- 9 Keep in touch.** Arrange for your child to spend time each day talking to friends or family members on the phone or on social media (with adult supervision where appropriate).
- 10 Look after yourself.** Being a full-time parent/carer with household duties and work is challenging. Make sure you eat and sleep well, and include time for your own rest and leisure in your daily routine.





