

Calming Minds Health Pack

Hello everyone!

Just touching base as we all know right now we are going through a challenging time of global uncertainty. I have put together this pack to help you navigate some of that uncertainty with your little ones.

First of all, it is normal for children to be feeling a wide range of uncomfortable emotions at the moment. Everyone has experienced sudden changes in their lives and routines – the coronavirus pandemic may trigger or worsen some anxieties.

I recommend you look at the activities and suggestions provided within this pack even if your child doesn't appear to be showing signs of worry. Although not everyone suffers with anxiety or with mental health difficulty, everyone does have a mind and just like our physical health it is good practice to try some mental health upkeep.

It is important for the children to know that all of their feelings are valid and it is okay to feel discomfort. Very often, the first step to feeling calm again is acknowledging that it is normal to feel some level of distress right now.

Everything in this pack is designed to be simple to use. It is full of easy activities that offer your child a way to express their current emotional well-being, and ways this can be improved. Reducing anxiety can be made into a full-family activity, and can be made fun for everybody in the home to enjoy, relax and unload their worries.

Stay Safe!



Mr Fletcher

Nurture Lead

Simple Anxiety reducing tips and tricks

- Breathing exercises – I have included a sheet with a breathing activity and a link to some other exercises, controlling breathing can help in moments of heightened anxiety or as a healthy happy way to change a person’s mindset. I recommend starting a day with stepping just outside the door and taking 5 deep breaths this can help increase lung function and keep your body healthy but also oxygenates the brain to help your mind feel better too!
- Reduce exposure to news - You cannot escape the news, but moderation is recommended. You and your children will be hearing and seeing headlines that can cast a negative shadow. It’s advisable to take care of your ‘media diet’ and reduce exposure for yourself and the children in your care. It’s recommended you check a trusted news source once per day and maybe try balancing this with a positive news sources e.g <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cx2pk70323et/uplifting-stories>.
- Mindfulness – A proven technique to improve resilience is mindfulness. Contrary to common understanding mindfulness is a very simple exercise that grounds a person into a moment. I have included a page on how mindfulness works and how it can be incorporated to any part of your day.
- Yoga – a happy health and fun way to keep your body happy and mind happy is yoga it incorporates breathing exercises with some light aerobic activity for a great release of happiness chemicals in your brain. ‘Cosmic Kids Yoga’ have some step by step yoga stories you can have a go at with your children for an excellent bonding and mental health boosting session. <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>
- When it’s all too much – sometimes children can find themselves in an extreme emotional episode. It’s usually temporary and often all they need is time and space where they can reflect. For many of us space has been greatly limited in these unusual circumstances but where possible

its best to allow a safe space and some time after an emotional outburst before addressing behaviours.

A trick to help change an emotional mindset faster is the 'TIP' skills these can be taught to your little one to regulate an emotional outburst.

T -temperature – splash your face with cold water or place a cold pack on forehead (changes the body chemistry bringing you into a calmer state of mind)

I - Intense Exercise – gets rid of some of the stored energy and adrenalin also activates some of the bodies calming regulators once the exercise is complete.

P- Paced Breathing- Controlling your breathing can change a mindset and bring you into a calmer state a good rule of thumb if your looking calm down using a breathing technique is to make sure you exhale longer than you inhale I have created some breathing exercises you can follow in the link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6zaH6Q1VAg>

- Time to talk – The best way to keep happy healthy minds is have time together where conversation can run freely. Coronavirus is likely to come up in the conversations as it's an unavoidable topic around the globe at the moment. It's important to remember even if you don't have all the answers its comforting for the children to talk about what worries them and let them know that everyone is doing their best to keep us safe. I have included a Social Story in this pack created by the Worcester Speech and Language sector that can help with conversations you have.
- Routine – uncertainty in any environment can cause anxiety. Having some structures within your day or timetabling your activities or even just stating what is going to happen next, before one activity has finished can reduce anxiety. Any amount of preparation for your child to know what their day will look like will ease their worries.

Starlight Breathing Exercise

Controlling your breathing can help you feel happy and healthy!

Run your finger round the edge of the star nice and slowly and control your breathing. Once you reach a point or a dip hold your breath for a beat then continue.



For some other breathing exercises I have prepared please visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6zaH6Q1VAg>



A feelings thermometer is a useful tool to show how you are feeling. Find a picture of yourself, or write your name on a piece of paper and stick it on how you feel. When your mood changes you can move where you are on the feelings thermometer.

It helps to let people know when we are struggling and when we feel good.

If you don't have a printer this design can be drawn, or maybe you can get some craft paper out and make a feelings thermometer on the back of an old cereal box or a piece of cardboard.

Out of my control
(belong to someone else)



In my control
(belong to me)

Sometimes we are holding onto worries that don't belong to us. Worries that belong to people that look after us and worries that belong to the people that look after the country. Work with your grown-up to sort some of your worries out. Think about what you can do to make yourself feel less worried, sometimes sharing your worries can help make them disappear.

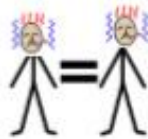
Example worries :

- What if I get the virus - (My worry - I can keep myself as safe as possible by washing hands and social distancing, - I am young and this means I am very good at getting better if I do get poorly.)
- Stopping the spread of the virus - (Not my worry - this worry belongs to those that look after the country and the scientists working on preventing Covid-19)

A story about Coronavirus



Lots of people are talking about Coronavirus because it is a new kind of flu.



Coronavirus is also called **Covid-19**. It has two names but it is the same flu.



Being healthy can help us NOT to get cold or flu germs.



Being healthy can also help us to get better quickly if we DO get the flu.



Children and grown-ups are very good at getting better quickly when they get the flu.



Sometimes older people can find it harder to get healthy again when they get the flu.



I can help everyone by staying healthy.



I can stay healthy by:

Washing my



hands

✓ Before I touch food



✓ After I have been to the toilet



✓ When I have sneezed or coughed or blown my nose



✓ When I have got them dirty



Trying not to touch my face





I can keep other people healthy by:



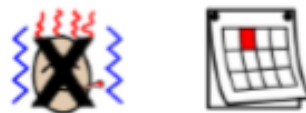
Coughing or sneezing into my elbow NOT my hand



Putting tissues straight in the bin



Staying at home if I feel ill



Just like other colds and flu Coronavirus will go away in a few months



If I am worried I can talk to my parents or my teachers

Mindfulness

Being mindful is super easy and can help your brain to feel great!

It's all about staying in the **now**. Your brain is super good at time traveling, and thinking about what you have been doing and what your going to do; mindfulness is getting your brain to focus on the now.

Try these exercises to try to be aware of everything you think and feel in the moment.

- **Squeeze Muscles:** Starting at your toes, pick one muscle and squeeze it tight. Count to five. Release, and notice how your body changes. Repeat exercise moving up the muscles in your body.
- **Mindful Listening:** Start a minute timer and close your eyes listen to your surroundings and see if you notice anything you wouldn't usually notice keep drawing your attention back to the moment.
- **Belly Breathing:** Put one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. Slowly breathe in from your stomach (expand like a balloon) and slowly breathe out (deflate).
- **Mindful Meal:** Pay attention to the smell, taste and look of your food. Take time to chew and really focus on the flavours.
- **Mindful moment:** Sit in a relaxed, comfortable position. Pick something to focus on, like your breath. When your mind wanders, bring your attention back to your breath.
- **Blowing Bubbles:** Notice their shapes, textures and colours.
- **Colouring:** Colour something. Focus on the colours and how the pencil feels as you colour and the patterns you make.
- **Listening to Music:** Focus on the whole song, or listen specifically to the voice or an instrument.

Questions to ask your child in self-isolation

YOUNGMINDS

What could help you to complete your school work at home? Where would you like to work at home?

Is there anything you want to talk about?

When was the last time you were very happy?

What makes you feel calm?

How can you keep in touch with friends and family at the moment? e.g. Facetime, Whatsapp

What things would you like to do in the future?

What difficulties are you facing now?

Would it be helpful if we planned each day together?

What can I do to help?

Do you have any worries about the coronavirus?

Where is a place you feel safe?

Where in our home do you feel like you can have your own space?

What have you enjoyed about today?

What are you worried about when you lie in bed and can't sleep?

Can you think of anything fun that we can do at home?

How do you feel about things changing?

How do you feel about staying at home?

Useful Websites

- <https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/childrens-speech-and-language-resources/>
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- <https://childmind.org/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7ZwZktuErhCp0kebyKzWTw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

and for something distracting and fun to learn and do feel free to visit my Sign language You-tube channel.

- <https://www.youtube.com/SignSing>