



WORRY AND ANXIETY

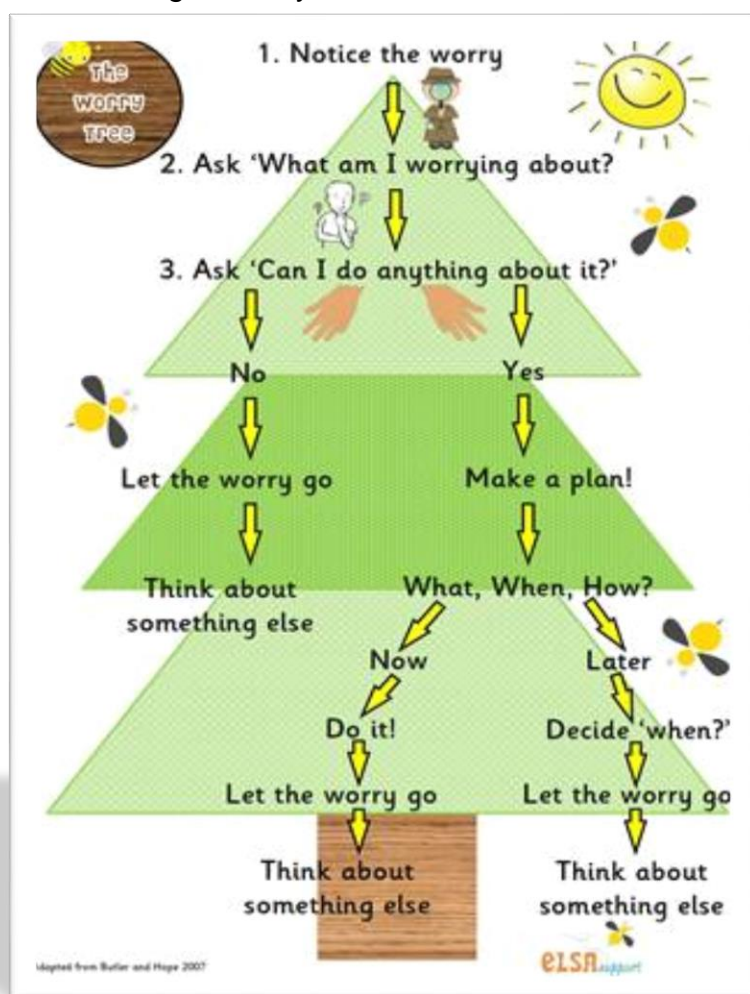
Dealing with anxious feelings during the Covid-19 pandemic

Advice for children and young people

You must have heard many times about the *Coronavirus*, or Covid-19, and you have probably noticed many changes around you. You might be feeling well, or you might be finding it hard to get used to all the changes taking place. Many children and young people have many questions about what is happening, and you may have questions too. Remember, it is fine to ask someone close to you about Covid-19, such as a teacher or parent. You may also get more information about Covid-19 in the resources section at the bottom of this page. It may be helpful to remind yourself that Covid-19 is rarely giving children and young people any serious problems.

All the talk about Covid-19 can make some children feel nervous, worried or anxious. Feeling this way is normal, and it does not mean there is anything wrong with you. It

may be helpful to do some things to feel better and less anxious. If you think you may be too worried and are having a hard time doing the things you usually enjoy doing and if you are having trouble sleeping, then read on below for some ideas.



1. Talk about your feelings: It's OK to feel worried. Do talk about how you feel with your family or someone else you can trust, such as a teacher. If you try to ignore feelings of stress, this can make it harder. At the same time, it may be helpful to remind yourself that there is no need for you to worry very often, because adults are working very hard to keep children, young people and adults safe. Even if you do get this virus, children usually don't get very sick from it. It's more like a mild cold. But you still have a unique role to play in protecting others! Older people, like grandparents, need your help to stay healthy



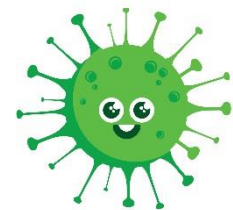
That means **washing your hands very much and staying home if you're sick.**

It may also mean skipping your usual routine and not going out like you usually do.

There you are; now you know what you can do!

2. When at home for a long time, keep yourself busy: do things by yourself

or with someone else, things which are healthy for you and which you enjoy. Try not to do one thing only for very long times, such as playing video games. You could try reading more or watching movies, doing some exercise or trying new relaxation techniques. Eat as healthy as you can and try and eat many fruit and vegetables unless your doctor said not to.



3. The internet and connecting with others online can be beneficial: do connect with your friends online when you can but remember – try and keep positive and don't forget that some information shared on the internet can be wrong! It's best to get information from your parents or teachers. With friends, also try to take the time to talk about the things you like or play games together. Do not read too many news stories as these tend to focus on bad things. Always stay safe and do not trust people you do not know online no matter how friendly they are.

Useful Resources

- **Online Free Counselling:** <https://www.childline.org.uk/>
- Support Telephone Number - Childline – **0800 1111**
- **Social Stories** for children with communication difficulties: <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/covid-social-story-school-closing-and-virus-12270054>
- **Young Minds Coping Resources:** <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>
- **Various resources** for children and young people including mindfulness and relaxation techniques: <https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/anxiety/>

Information for Professionals

Yes, these are unusual times indeed: and as a professional you are likely to be facing pressures as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Employers and employees



need to respond to unprecedented changes and those who are working in front-line health, care and education positions may experience increased anxiety while having to coordinate front-lines duties, look after yourself and those close to you. You may also experience disturbance of sleep at this time, while your mind tries to process the complexity of the current situation.

Surveys issued by *People Management* and polled over 390 employers to establish what the presently perceived main organisational challenge is, found that nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of respondents cited general anxiety as their organisation's main challenge. Professionals need to recognise that stress and anxiety can be an appropriate and proportionate response to the situation. "These are anxious, difficult, unprecedented times and we don't have any similar experiences to go on so perhaps one of the things to do is acknowledge that people feel anxious and they're not making a fuss" (*People Management*, 2020).

1. Check-in regularly with your colleagues and managers- The human connection is essential when working, now more than ever. It will also help to keep up to date on the changes taking place, including any requested consideration made for facilitating remote working. In considering all the information that is being made available, it is understandable that you have missed a piece, an email or a message – so don't hesitate to ask for clarification or reminders if needed.



2. Take the opportunity to be creative and think of ways you can contribute to maintaining your service while working safely at a distance if these haven't yet been suggested. Most managers are striving to figure out how to make most of the unprecedented change in the work environment. Share any ideas you may have which you feel have been missed.

3. Organise a functional Remote Working Routine: This needs to be flexible enough to include time for breaks and any ongoing communication and commitments you will need to maintain with other people you share your living space with.

4. Try and keep your work channels clear for work topics - but create social channels too on your intranet or messaging tools. Keep a space where you and your colleagues can both share work-related information and other recreational pieces such as videos and photos.



5. Presently, Employers and employees may experience a higher level of stress and anxiety– this is to be expected.

There are various resources in the final section, including recommendations on how to cope with excessive anxiety if you or your staff are experiencing it. Communicating the need for help with your colleagues and management, however, especially if you feel overwhelmed remains essential.

6. Remember to stay mentally and physically active outside of working hours, possibly even taking these unusual times as an opportunity to rediscover lost interests and passions or explore new ones.

Resources and further reading:

- **People Management Reference and link:**
<https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/advice/coronavirus-support-employers-hub>
- **Anxiety in the Workplace:** <https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace>
- **Looking after your mental health:**
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/while-working#>

Information for Parents/Carers and Schools

It is to no surprise that many Children and Young People may experience anxiety concerning Covid-19. The British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) has recently published advice on how to talk to children about Covid-19. The following recommendations are based on the guidance provided:



1. It is good to talk: Children will have heard about Coronavirus or Covid-19 and likely noticed changes around them (such as people wearing face masks). It is important they feel comfortable talking to you about this as you will be the best source of information and reassurance for them. It's also likely they will speak to their friends or other children, which can involve imagination and misinformation. So having the chance to check-in with you is even more helpful.

2. Be truthful but remember your child's age: Children should take an honest and accurate approach – give them information but adjust the amount and detail to suit



their age. For example, you might say 'we don't yet have a vaccination for Covid-19, but doctors are working very hard on it' or 'a lot of people might get sick, but normally it is like a cold

or flu and they get better'. Younger children might understand a cartoon or picture better. We also recommend that adults watch news programmes and then filter this information to their child in a developmentally appropriate way.

3. Allow children to ask questions: Naturally, children will have questions, and likely worries, about Covid-19. Giving them the space to ask these questions and have answers is a good way to alleviate anxiety. Again, try to be honest in your responses – it is OK to say you don't know. Now, there are questions we don't have answers to about Covid-19 – you can explain this to your child and add in information about what people are doing to try to answer these questions. Maybe your child has an idea too – let them tell you or draw them.

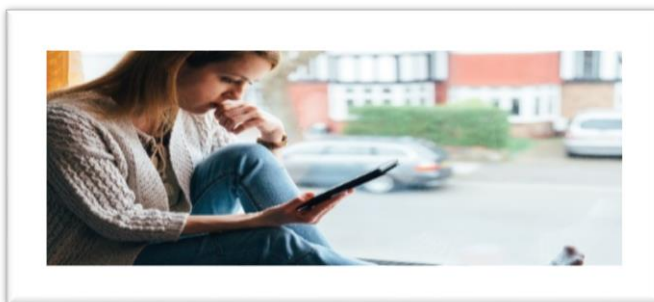
4. Try to manage your own worries: Uncertainty can make all of us feel anxious or worried. Identify other adults you can talk to about your own worries and questions. What things usually help to make you feel a bit calmer? If you are at home; music, breathing and relaxation techniques, distraction (such as watching something funny), and time with family members can all help. Talk to your children when you feel calm – it will reassure them.

5. Give practical guidance: Remind your child of the most important things they can do to stay healthy – washing their hands, and following the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' advice for coughs and sneezes. Help your child practise these routines and increase their motivation to keep going (forego they may wish to sing a song while washing their hands).

1. Recognise the child's emotions and empathise with child.
2. Validate and label the child's feelings
3. Set limits on behaviour (if needed)
4. Problem-solve with the child

6. If you encounter non-cooperative behaviours, practice *Emotion Coaching* with Children and young people by 1. *recognising their emotions*, 2. *validating their feelings*, 3. *setting limits on behaviours* and 4. *facilitating joint problem solving*. This is a different and more effective approach compared to imposing solutions or 'orders' authoritatively. It can be quite

likely that many of us tend to automatically head straight for setting limits on behaviour and demanding adherence to rules. This can often not work when children are feeling emotionally overwhelmed and lead to the escalation of challenging behaviour. The steps outlined in emotions coaching not only makes it easier to manage any behaviours that can be experienced as challenging but will also help develop a connection with your child/ young person and reduce the chances for 'difficult' behaviours get out of hand. Emotions coaching is also known to improve the development of self-regulation. Self-Regulation involves the capacity for children and young people to independently take control of their behaviours and manage difficult emotions and thoughts. It also allows them the capacity to think more helpful thoughts. In addition, self-regulation involves one's ability to at set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses.



7. Promoting the development of self-regulation is essential part of parenting, along with teaching

children to respect social boundaries and rules. *The Harvard Centre for the Developing child (2020)* explains how self-regulation promoting environments provide children with "scaffolding" that helps them practice necessary skills before they must perform them alone. Adults can facilitate the development of a child's self-regulation skills by establishing routines, modelling social behaviour, and creating and maintaining supportive, reliable relationships.

It is also important for children to exercise their developing skills through activities that: foster creative play and social connection, teach them how to cope with stress involve vigorous exercise, and over time, provide opportunities for directing their own actions with decreasing adult supervision.

8. The EP service runs a telephone hotline for school staff every Wednesday afternoon. During the Covid-19 pandemic we **have extended our telephone hotline to include parents**. An Educational Psychologist from each area team will be available to consult about children or broader education issues every week on a Wednesday afternoon. EPs will focus on problem solving, providing information and signposting as appropriate.



No prior arrangement is necessary – simply call into your area telephone number between **1– 4pm each Wednesday as follows:**

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No prior arrangement is necessary – simply call into your area telephone number between **1– 4pm each Wednesday as follows:**

North East:	01372 833588
South East:	01737 737777
North West:	01483 518130
South West:	01483 517179

Resources and further reading

- **National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)** www.nasponline.org
- **Talking to Children -** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhVad8ToCiU&feature=youtu.be>
- **Social stories for children with communication difficulties:** <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/covid-social-story-school-closing-and-virus-12270054>
- **British Psychological Society:** <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Coronavirus%20and%20UK%20schools%20closures%20-%20support%20and%20advice.pdf>
- **Emotion Coaching UK:** <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>
- **Centre of the Developing Child - Harvard University:** <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>