

# HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COPE WITH STRESS



The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is affecting our daily lives, as the government and NHS take necessary steps to manage the outbreak. Regardless of their age, this may be a difficult time for children and young people. Some may react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty later on.

Please read on for advice and guidance from Public Health England with regards to helping children and young people cope with stress.

## 1 LISTEN AND ACKNOWLEDGE

Look out for changes in behaviour. Young people respond to stress in different ways - signs may be emotional, behavioural or physical.

Children and young people may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Listen to them, acknowledge their concerns, and give them extra love and attention if they need it.



## 2 PROVIDE CLEAR INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITUATION

We can help young people feel safer by being open and honest with them, answering any questions they may have. Explain what is being done to keep them and their loved ones safe, including anything they might be able to do to help, like regular hand-washing.

Ensure that information given is correct. Use the NHS and GOV.UK websites to verify information and use age appropriate language that your child will understand. If you cannot give answers, simply listen and acknowledge so that they feel heard.



## 3 BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN REACTIONS

Remember that children and young people often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives, so how you respond to the situation is very important.

It is important to manage your own emotions and remain calm, listen to and acknowledge children and young people's concerns, speak kindly to them, and answer any questions they have honestly.



## 4 CONNECT REGULARLY

If it is necessary for you or your children to be in a different location to normal (for example, staying at home in different locations or hospitalisation) make sure you still have regular and frequent contact via the phone or video calls with them. Try to help your child understand what arrangements are being made for them and why in simple terms.

Ensure that children maintain regular contact with family members/friends so that they continue to feel connected to their wider network.



## 5 CREATE A NEW ROUTINE

Life is changing for all of us for a while. Routine gives children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty, so think about how to develop a new routine – especially if they are not at school.

Regular exercise, good sleep patterns and a timetable for the day will all help to manage stress and anxiety for young people.



## 6 LIMIT EXPOSURE TO MEDIA AND TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN AND HEARD

Children and young people, like adults, may become more distressed if they see repeated coverage of the outbreak in the media. A complete news blackout is also rarely helpful as they are likely to find out from other sources, such as online or through friends.

Limit the amount of exposure to the news, however try not to remove it completely as this may lead to young people researching for themselves and reading incorrect information, making them more stressed.



To access the whole Public Health England guidance paper, please visit <https://www.woottonparkschool.org.uk/closure-information>

If you or your child feel that they would benefit from a check in from the Wellbeing team, go to [www.schoolinterviews.co.uk](http://www.schoolinterviews.co.uk) and enter code bky83 to book a call.

Our team will try their very best to make contact within 2 hours of the time booked.

