

## Information for parents April 2020

The situation at the moment is a really difficult time for everyone and has lots of challenges. NSPCC have put together some information that will hopefully give you some ideas to help keep you and your children safe and well during this time as well as contact numbers for help and advice.

We are all apart at the moment but that doesn't mean you are alone and help is still available to anyone who needs it.

**We're still here for children and their families**

### Talking to you child about Coronavirus

**Talk of the coronavirus (or COVID-19) is everywhere and it's hard to get away from. Many parents and carers are wondering how to bring up the epidemic in a way that will be reassuring for children.**

#### **Here is some advice on talking to children about Coronavirus.**

- Find out what your child already knows
- Sometimes information you see on social media is misleading or wrong so check the facts.
- You know your child best so tailor what you say around them and answer any questions they have.
- Approach the subject simply and calmly and reassure them that things will go back to normal eventually.
- Remind them what they can do to help – washing hands often, coughing and sneezing into their elbow etc.
- Keep talking regularly, things change quickly so stay up-to-date with the latest recommendations.
- Some young people might be anxious about if there will be enough food. Have conversations about how what they might see in the news or online isn't always the same as what's happening. Involve them in food shopping lists and be mindful of conversations you might have with other adults about frustrations buying food.
- For children with eating disorders, worries about food can be really challenging. Talk to them about their worries and speak to BEAT the eating disorder charity (<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>) if you need advice. Read their advice on eating disorders and coronavirus (COVID-19) for up-to-date information and support.
- Rolling news and social media can cause a lot of anxiety. Remind children of the facts and explain what false or sensationalized information is. It's important to allow your children to ask questions about the things they see online. And if you don't know the answer, letting them know that some things aren't certain or known yet is okay.

The NSPCC website has lots of information about Coronavirus including talking to children about the virus, tips on working from home, dealing with tantrums and many other topics.

Visit [www.NSPCC.org.uk](http://www.NSPCC.org.uk)

### Where to go for advice and support

#### **NSPCC helpline**

Worried about a child? Call **0808 800 5000**

We understand that sometimes it's hard to know what to do or whether to report a concern or not. We can help you spot signs of danger and give you advice to prevent abuse and protect children.

Whatever your worry, you can ask us.

#### **Stoke-on-Trent Covid-19 Support Network**

A group made up of Stoke on Trent City Council, Voluntary Sector Organisations and Volunteers. They will be working closely with health colleagues to ensure that the people of Stoke-on-Trent are protected and kept informed.

**0800 561 5610** - 9:00-17:00 Monday to Friday. Calls are directed to an emergency team during weekends.

#### **Childline**

Phone **0800 1111**, 09:00am-midnight during the Coronavirus epidemic

Comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling.

Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online (only available until 10:30 during the lockdown).

#### **YoungMinds Crisis Messenger**

Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK for young people who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

**Text YM to 85258** if you need urgent help

Texts are free from most mobile providers

All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.

#### **YoungMinds Parents Helpline**

This is a helpline to offer advice to parents and carers concerned about their child's behaviour, emotional wellbeing or mental health.

Call the free helpline for confidential, expert advice on **0808 8025544**.

Available Mon-Fri from 9.30am to 4pm - available in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

#### **Samaritans**

Phone **116123** (24 hours) or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

24 hour confidential listening and support for anyone who needs it, adults and children.

#### **National Domestic Abuse Helpline**

You can speak to a member of the National Domestic Abuse Helpline team at any time, day or night. The Helpline adviser will offer confidential, non-judgmental information and expert support.

**0808 2000 247**

[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

## Scams

Unfortunately, scammers are taking advantage of the uncertainty around the Covid-19 outbreak to profit. We have put together a list of the most widely reported scams and how to avoid falling prey.

- ⇒ **Fake lockdown fines** - People have been warned not to fall for a bogus text message saying they have been fined for stepping outside during the coronavirus lockdown. The scam message claims to be from the Government, telling the recipient their movements have been monitored through their phone and they must pay a fine or face a more severe penalty.
- ⇒ **HMRC goodwill payment** - The MET police are warning of a fake message designed to steal your account details that says 'As part of the NHS promise to battle the COV-19 virus, HMRC has issued a payment of £258 as a goodwill payment'.
- ⇒ **Free school meals** - the Department for Education has issued warnings about a scam email designed to steal your bank details saying: 'As schools will be closing, if you're entitled to free school meals, please send your bank details and we'll make sure you're supported.'

For more information and the latest information visit:

[www.gov.uk/government/news/be-vigilant-against-coronavirus-scams](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/be-vigilant-against-coronavirus-scams)

[www.which.co.uk/news/2020/04/coronavirus-scams-how-to-spot-them-and-stop-them](http://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/04/coronavirus-scams-how-to-spot-them-and-stop-them)

## Wash your hands of coronavirus scams!

Friends Against Scams aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams.

### Be aware of people offering or selling:

- Virus testing kits - these are only offered by NHS.
- Vaccines or miracle cures - there is currently no vaccine or cure.
- Overpriced or fake goods to protect yourself from coronavirus such as anti-bacterial products.
- Shopping or medication collection services.
- Home decontamination services.

### Protect yourself and others:

- Don't be rushed into making a decision. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.
- Only purchase goods and services from legitimate retailers and take a moment to think before parting with money or personal information.
- Don't assume everyone is genuine. It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.
- If someone claims to represent a charity, ask them for ID. Be suspicious of requests for money up front. If someone attempts to pressurise you into accepting a service they are unlikely to be genuine. Check with family and friends before accepting offers of help if you are unsure.

Be a good friend,  
help to protect  
your family, friends  
and neighbours  
from scams.

Read It.  
Share It.  
Prevent It.

#Coronavirus  
#ScamAware



### Contact

For advice on scams call the  
Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 11 33**  
To report a scam call Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**  
Contact your bank if you think you have been scammed.

**NATIONAL  
TRADING  
STANDARDS**

Scams Team

To learn more about the different types of scams visit [www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk](http://www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk)

### Calm Kit

Ideas to share with children and families to manage stress, anxiety, low feelings and anger.

Childline's website has a Calm zone, a unique space for children and young people filled with breathing exercises, activities, games and videos to help let go of stress. Below are a few examples, it can be really good to practice these as a family and model using them to encourage your child to use them.

### Breathing exercises

Taking slow, deep breaths can help you feel calmer and more relaxed. You can try just one of these exercises or as many as you like. You might need to repeat an exercise a few times until you feel it working.

#### **Breathe and sigh**

Breathe in through your nose, make a big sigh and drop your shoulders downwards as you breathe out through your mouth

Repeat this 4 times

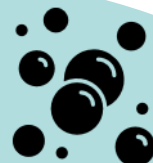


#### **Calming words**

Breathe in while you say to yourself "I feel calm"  
Breath out while you say to yourself "I let go of stress"  
Breath in while you say to yourself "Feel calm"  
Breathe out and say to yourself "Let go of stress"



Using 'props' like blowing bubbles or a feather is a good way to teach children how to control their breathing whilst making it fun and interesting. Encourage children to blow slow and steady, in through the nose out through the mouth



## Drawing & writing activities

### **Gingerbread man**

We hold tension in our bodies when we're under pressure, feeling stressed or feeling anxious.

Draw the outline of a gingerbread person and add where you feel stress and anxiety in your body - that might be butterflies in your tummy, your legs feeling weak or your heart beating fast.

Draw how it feels in each part of your body and use colours or numbers to show where you feel the strongest sensations. Let go of any tension by unclenching your hands, dropping your shoulders, stretching, doing yoga or dancing and draw or write any changes on your picture.



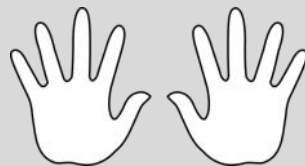
### **Helping hand**

Draw the outline of your hand on paper or using the Art box on ChildLine's website. Follow the outline with your finger or click on it with the mouse to trace the shape as you take a slow, deep breath. Start at the thumb, move to your other fingers and end with your little finger as you breathe in.

Trace back from the little finger to the thumb as you breathe out.

If you can't make it all the way around, you can start with tracing around the thumb and the first finger while you breathe in and around the first finger and back around the thumb as you breathe out.

You can colour in the hand after.



### **Crystal Ball**

Imagine 3 months from now. Draw or write what might look different, what challenges you will have faced and what positive changes you want to make.

Try to focus on things that seem possible to achieve like feeling more confident about an exam, starting a new hobby or making a new friend.

If it's hard to think that far ahead, you could start by imagining next week or next month.

### **Mirror**

Draw yourself as your closest friend or a close family member would describe you. Remember, they can see who you are as a person as well as what you look like.

Draw or write the positive qualities they notice about you, especially the ones that you find hard to see yourself. Include things like being kind, patient and fun.

## Relieving stress and focusing your mind

### **Treasure box**

Find 4 or more items to hold or feel. You can choose things like a blanket to wrap around yourself, a smooth stone to hold, something that was given to you by someone important to you, the lyrics of a happy song or a poem that makes you feel positive .

Put them in a bag or a box in your room. When you feel under pressure, worried or upset choose 1 item out of the box to hold while you remember a time that you felt safe and calm . After 2 or 3 minutes replace it and choose another.

You can do this as many times as you like

### **Let it go**

Find a box, something small like a shoe box or a chocolate box. Write down what's worrying you on a piece of paper and place it in the box.

Tell yourself that you don't need to think about the worry at the moment and you can let it go and leave it in the box for now.

You can do this as many times as you like. Remember to keep the box somewhere private or share with someone you trust.

### **Do some exercise**

Run, jump, skip, dance, do an online workout, kick a ball in the garden or go for a walk. Being active helps your mood, keeps you healthy and can take your mind off things. We have included a list of fun, active activities to try at the end of this pack.

### **The Robot/Ragdoll**

Relax your body by tightening all your muscles for a few seconds like a Robot then relax them, going floppy like a ragdoll.

### **Relax and imagine**

Get comfy, close your eyes and image you are in a place you feel safe and calm. Then then imagine what each of your five senses would pick up – sounds, smells, sensations, tastes and sights.

### **Distract yourself**

Do something fun that you enjoy and will distract you, like reading, games, TV, music.

### **Grounding**

Focus on what you can see, feel, smell and hear to help bring you back to now, to relax and let go of difficult memories.



## Children's mental health

### **Helping a child with anxiety or depression**

Realising that your child may be struggling with their mental health and experiencing anxiety or depression can be hard to accept. Sometimes parents can feel like it's their fault or want to know why their child is struggling with a mental health problem. This is completely understandable, but the most important thing you can do is to reassure your child and not judge them for how they're feeling.

#### **Signs of depression in children and teenagers can include:**

- ⇒ Persistent low-mood or lack of motivation
- ⇒ Not enjoying things they used to like doing
- ⇒ Becoming withdrawn and spending less time with friends and family
- ⇒ Experiencing low self-esteem or feeling like they are 'worthless'
- ⇒ Feeling tearful or upset regularly
- ⇒ Changes in eating or sleeping habits.

#### **Signs of anxiety in children and teenagers can include:**

- ⇒ Becoming socially withdrawn and avoiding spending times with friends or family
- ⇒ Feeling nervous or 'on edge' a lot of the time
- ⇒ Suffering panic attacks
- ⇒ Feeling tearful, upset or angry
- ⇒ Trouble sleeping and changes in eating habits.

#### **Ways to help a child who's struggling include:**

- ⇒ Letting them know you're there for them and are on their side
- ⇒ Try talking to them over text or on the phone if they don't feel able to talk in person
- ⇒ Being patient and staying calm and approachable, even if their behaviour upsets you
- ⇒ Recognising that their feelings are valid and letting them know it's okay for them to be honest about what it's like for them to feel this way
- ⇒ Thinking of healthy ways to cope you could do together, like yoga, breathing exercises or mindfulness
- ⇒ Encouraging them to talk to their GP, someone at their school or Childline. Especially if they're finding it hard to talk at home.
- ⇒ Take care of yourself and get support if you need to. Try not to blame yourself for what's happening and to stay hopeful about your child's recovery.

### If you're worried a child is feeling suicidal

While not every child with depression or anxiety will feel suicidal, sometimes mental health problems can feel overwhelming for children and young people. If a young person talks about wanting to hurt or harm themselves, or expresses suicidal feelings, they should always be taken seriously.

#### **Signs that a child or young person may be having suicidal feelings or thinking about suicide, include:**

- ⇒ Becoming more depressed or withdrawn, spending a lot of time by themselves
- ⇒ An increase in dangerous behaviours like taking drugs or drinking alcohol
- ⇒ Becoming obsessed with ideas of suicide, death or dying, which could include internet searches
- ⇒ Saying things like "I'd be better off dead", "No one would miss me", "I just wish I wasn't here anymore".
- ⇒ If you're worried, it's important to get help right away. Our trained counsellors can provide help or advice over the phone on 0808 800 5000. Children and young people under 19 can also get support from Childline online or over the phone, 24 hours a day.

However a child or young person is feeling, remind them that they're not alone and there are ways to cope and feel better. Childline also has online advice and tips for young people on coping with suicidal feelings that they can use right now.

### Getting mental health support for your child

If your child has a social worker or a Family Support Worker, they would be the first person to speak to but here are some other options for support.

#### Speak to your GP

Supporting a child with a mental health problem like depression or anxiety can be really hard and it's important for a young person to speak to their GP about professional help if they're struggling. This should be the first step you take if you're worried a child may have a mental health problem. Sometimes a GP will prescribe medication to help a child or young person with depression or anxiety symptoms.

Your child may want to speak to their GP on their own or they may want you to be there with them. It's important for you to support their decision if they'd prefer to talk to a GP alone, as sometimes young people can find it easier to talk about their feelings with someone they don't know.

#### Talk to your child about Childline

Childline is a free and confidential service for young people under 18. Children can talk to a trained counsellor over the phone, online via 1-2-1 chat or via email about anything that's worrying them, 24 hours a day. Many young people find it easier to be honest about their mental health with someone they don't know.

Childline also have lots of information and advice for young people on how to cope with mental health problems.

The ChildLine website also offers advice and coping techniques for depression, anxiety, suicidal feelings, eating problems, body image, mental health and other issues.



### Get help from your child's school

It can also help to speak to someone at your child's school, like their teacher. Your school should be able to provide someone who your child can speak to regularly about their mental health, such as a school counsellor. Ask your child if there's a teacher at their school they might feel comfortable speaking to. Even if your child is not attending school at the moment most teachers are keeping in touch by email or phone.

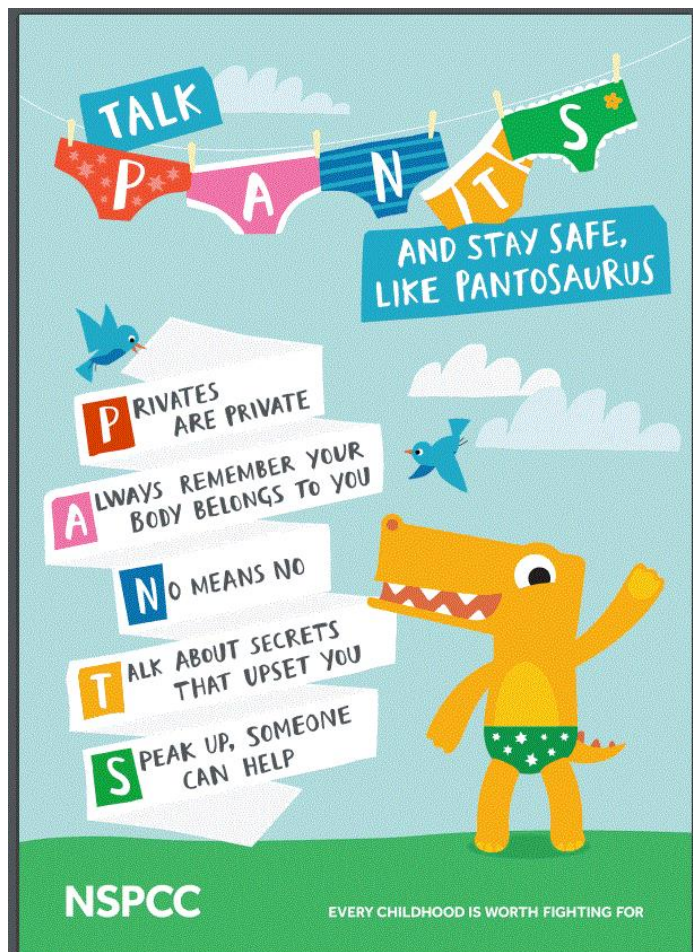
### Ask about a referral to CAMHS

If your child has been feeling unhappy or anxious for a long time, or is showing signs of self-harm or suicidal thoughts, it's important to consider professional help so that they can get the support they need.

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) is a free NHS service for children and young people under 18. CAMHS can help young people who are struggling with serious mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, self-harm, panic attacks or eating problems.

Referral is usually done through your child's GP and unfortunately it can take up to several weeks for an initial assessment. Social services can also refer young people to CAMHS if they're already supporting your child.

Sometimes parents come to the first appointment with their child, or may be offered family therapy but often your child will see a CAMHS worker on their own. This is important as it can help children to be more honest about how they're feeling.



# childline

ONLINE,  
ON THE PHONE,  
ANYTIME

childline.org.uk  
0800 1111

## NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Help for adults concerned about a  
child  
Call us on 0808 800 5000

Help for children and young people  
Call Childline on 0800 1111