

HEALTHY MINDS DURING COVID-19



During the outbreak of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19), it is very common and even expected to have a wide range of feelings, emotions or sensations. This guide is here to help you understand and manage how you are feeling during this difficult time, especially if you feel worried or low.

Parents and carers

This booklet works best if you and your child work on it together. Please read through this booklet before you begin working on it with your child. Have pens and paper handy.

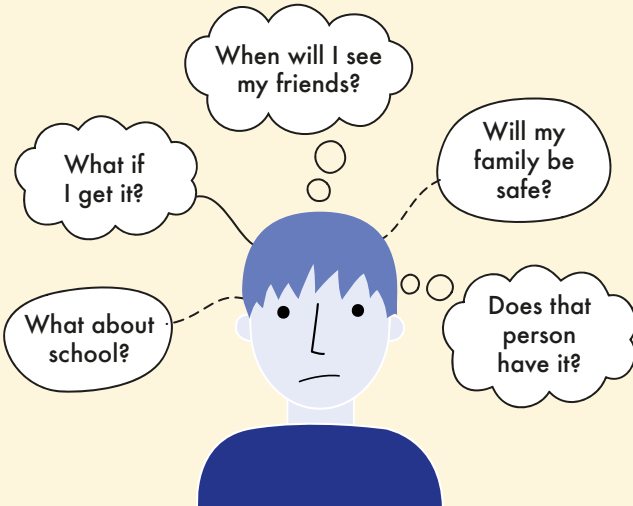
Stamps

It's good to read through this whole booklet. However, if your child is feeling low, some sections are more relevant than others. Look out for these stamps to know which sections are more relevant for your child.



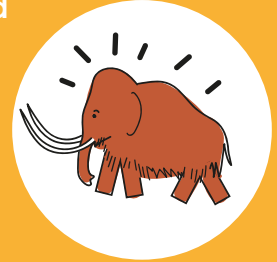
I FEEL WORRIED!

It's very common to feel worried about COVID-19.



We feel worried when we come across something that appears threatening.

In the past this could have been a big woolly mammoth. Today, this could mean when a car passes you very fast and you jump.



It can also be when COVID-19 is all over the news and becomes a big and scary thought.

When we encounter a threat, this triggers our fight, flight or freeze response.

When we are in flight/flight/freeze mode, changes happen in the body and with our emotions.

EMOTIONS

- Anger
- Sadness
- Irritation
- Annoyance

Head feels fuzzy/can't think

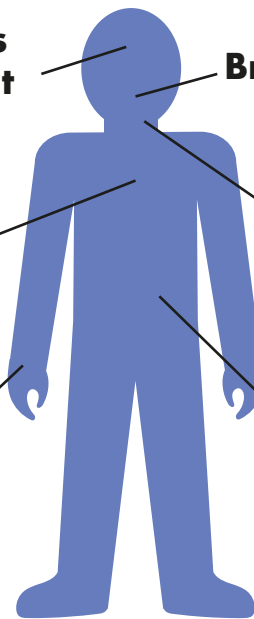
Breathe fast

Red face

Heart beats fast

Get hot

Body hurts (muscles or tummy ache)



This might not feel good but it's our body's natural reaction. Our body is trying to keep us safe and protect us from any threat. Imagine what would have happened to cave men if they weren't worried about sabretooth tigers...they might have ended up as a tasty snack!

While its common and important to feel worried sometimes, we don't want to feel worried all the time; this doesn't feel very nice at all! The good thing is we can do things to feel less worried and we can continue to do things we like despite feeling worried. You can find some hints and tips throughout this booklet.

Right now, I have a **BIG** thought, emotion or feeling in my body.



What do I do?

1 Pause and stop what you are doing

2 It's time to become a detective and investigate your inner world. As COVID-19 unfolds and we stay in lockdown you may feel angry, sad or lonely. Find out what thoughts, emotions or feelings in your body you have. It's important not to ignore but to acknowledge what's there and describe these using neutral words.



ACTIVITY

Say this five times:

**COVID-19
is scary**

Tell your parent/carer
how this feels.

Now say:

**I notice that
I'm feeling
scared**

How does it feel?

Saying how you're feeling using neutral words helps you feel in control and makes your emotions feel less overwhelming.



- 3** Connect with your body and your senses. You don't have to do all the following activities at the moment you feel overwhelmed, but experiment and see which ones work for you.

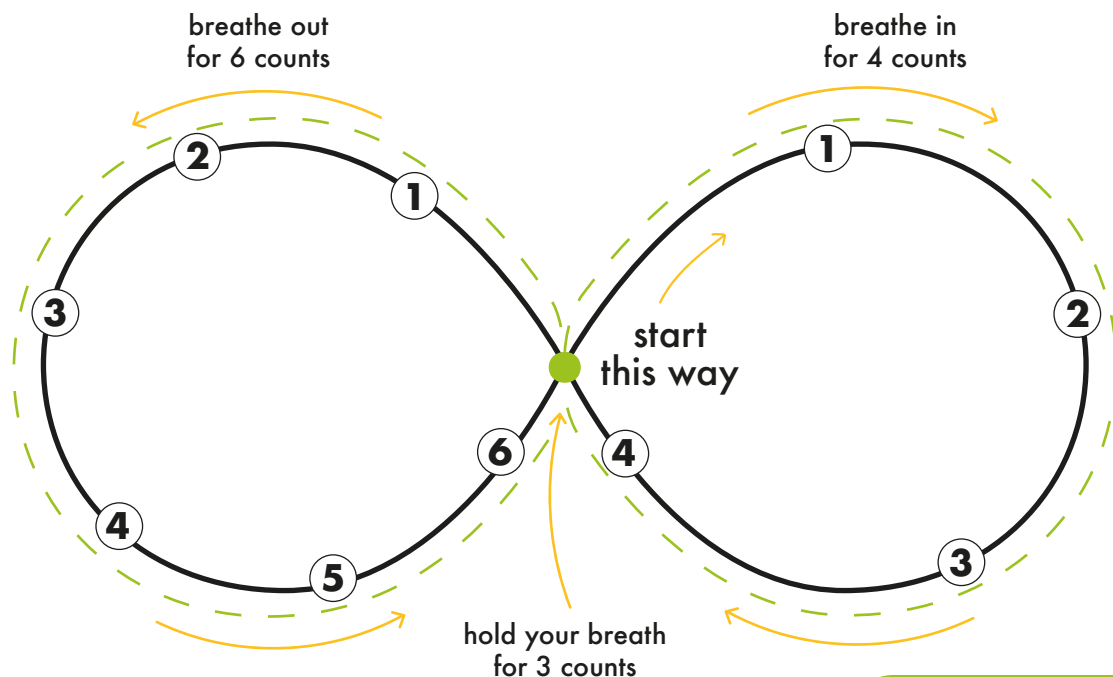
BREATHING

Focusing on your breathing can help to relax your body, slow down your thoughts and reduce how overwhelmed you are feeling. You can do this anywhere and anytime that you feel comfortable enough to do so. It may also help to sit down so you can focus on your body.

ACTIVITY

Breathing like an 8

Breathe in for 4 counts • Hold your breath for 3 counts
Breathe out for 6 counts • Repeat several times



TIP:

Don't worry about being exact with the counts, as long as you breathe out for longer.

CONNECTING TO THOSE SENSES



Connecting with your senses can help you to slow down and be in the moment.

ACTIVITY

At the moment you feel overwhelmed you can notice and name:



5 things that you can **see**



4 things that you can **feel**
(the carpet, the label on your shirt)



3 things you can **hear**
(the whirring of a computer, someone moving upstairs)



2 things you can **smell** or **taste**
(smell the dog/taste toothpaste)



Lastly, take a **breath** or do a **movement**

You can also make a sensory box/bag to use when you have big emotions or thoughts. For example, inside you might have:

A calming picture of a beach, place you like or even your pet



Something small that tastes nice like chocolate or a mint



Blu-tack, a teddy or even dry pasta may feel nice to touch



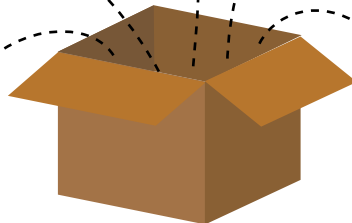
Something that smells nice. Ask your parent/carer for an item of clothing that smells like them. If you have a favourite blanket you can also spray your parent/carer's perfume/aftershave on it



You can make a playlist of your favourite songs that make you feel good or relaxed



When you feel overwhelmed you can take out this box, concentrate on the items inside and take a moment to slow down.



ACTIVITY

Talk about what you would have in your sensory box.

TIP:

Try to do one sensory activity together a day - go outside for a walk or even around the house, move in between activities, drum or tap on surfaces, sing, do breathing exercises, bake, craft, draw, listen to music, dance etc. When you do these activities focus on what you are doing and try to be present in that moment.

4

Continue to do things you like and what matters to you



I FEEL LOW

COVID-19 and the changes it has caused in your life and your reactions to these might be changing your mood. You might feel sad, lonely or you might find it hard to enjoy activities you used to find fun.

Feeling low might be changing the way you think:



Changes you might notice:

- eating lots/not eating much
- body hurts (muscle ache or pain)
- not sleeping well
- doing less than before
- tearful
- stop talking to family and friends as much

It's ok to feel low or cry; everyone feels low sometimes. COVID-19 might cause changes in how we think, our body and our actions. However, if COVID-19 is making you feel low most of the time, you need to take action.

STAY ACTIVE - FEEL GOOD

It's important to have things to do even if you can't go to school and have to stay at home:

Try to do something new!

Drawing, baking, reading; anything you like. Achieving something new will help you to feel good.

Talk to your family and friends

Not being able to see them is difficult but you can make plans to call or video chat.

Limit social media use

It can help us feel connected but can also stop us from doing other activities so it's good to limit the time you spend on Snapchat, Tik Tok, Instagram etc.

Limit how much news you watch

If you watch the news, do it with your parents.

Help with house chores

Feel good by being helpful, active, and achieving.



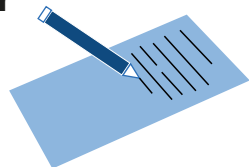
HAVING ROUTINE

Stick to your morning and evening routines. For example, get up in the morning and get dressed as you usually would.

Plan each day. When we don't have a routine, this can make us feel unsafe. It's important to keep things as normal as possible during this uncertain time.

ACTIVITY

Write or type your schedule for tomorrow



HINT:

You can even plan your week ahead of time (on a Sunday). Work with your family to make a weekly calendar that you put on the fridge or record your daily plan on your phone. Make a plan and try to stick to it!

MY INNER SUPERHERO

What will matter to you during COVID-19? What kind of superhero will you be and how can you help yourself and others?



I can protect myself and others by:

- Staying at home (social distancing)
- Washing my hands

I can be kind to myself by:

- Talking to someone I love when I feel upset (even about small things)
- Eating well and exercising
- Being gentle with myself. Sometimes I will get upset, be angry, feel lonely, low or frustrated and that's OK, it happens to all of us.



ACTIVITY

Think of someone you love (best friend, sibling, carer). If they were feeling the way you do about COVID-19, what would you say to help them? How would you treat them? Treat yourself the same way.

I can be caring towards others:

- Call or text my friends or family. Just chatting is a great way to support them.
- By being nice to the people in my house. Do some activities together.

Do small things that matter to you every day and unleash your inner superhero.



What CAN I do?

It's ok to feel worried about COVID-19. You might be worried about the effect it will have on you and your family or what might happen in the future. Many of us will do this, however focusing on all the things you can't control might make you feel low or worried. Try to let go of the things you can't control and instead focus on what you can control. For example, how you wash your hands, finding fun things to do at home and your attitude.



ACTIVITY

**Draw your own 'I CAN' circle.
Write all the things inside it that you can control.**

At this time the most important thing to remember is to be kind to yourself. Scientists, the NHS, supermarket staff and other adults are doing the best they can to help us and keep us safe.

PARENTS HINTS AND TIPS

Your relationship with your child is the best tool to support them

Do positive things together that have no relation to COVID-19. For example, watch your child play Minecraft and engage with them fully during this activity (try not to think about doing the dishes...)

Your child might not want to chat about how they're feeling and that's OK

They may be more likely to talk while spending quality time with you.

Have as regular a routine as possible

This will help your child feel safe and less anxious.

Be aware of your reactions to the news

If you are calm, your children are more likely to model this reaction also.

Take breaks from social media and the news

Be aware if you are letting COVID-19 information dominate your family life.

Get your news from a trusted source:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Try to highlight positive things to your child

Lockdown is so we can protect ourselves and others, stay safe and support the NHS. Lockdown means we can spend more time together and do nice things.

CREDITS

Content created by Anna Forbes-Gray (Trainee Clinical Associate in Applied Psychology)

Designed & Illustrated by Mairi Hughes