



Parenting during Covid -19

Anxiety, boredom and being away from friends and the routines of school can make children and young people's behaviour particularly challenging. It is hard for everyone when you are all in a confined space together! Children learn from watching others and will mimic the behaviour of the adults in their lives. Speaking kindly, being consistent, admitting when you are wrong, staying calm and talking about your feelings are all behaviours that you want to model during this difficult time.

Routines and Boundaries

Children are creatures of habit and they like the security and predictability of routines. Routines help us to feel safe and secure because we know what is going to happen and when. Remember that children are used to having quite rigid routines in school! Try to establish some simple routines at home to give some structure to your child's day. Think about morning routines, mealtimes and consistent bedtimes. Establish set times for school work and remember to plan in breaks and active time.

All children, whatever their age, need clear boundaries. These may be formal house rules or agreed behaviours that are taught and discussed with the family. These have to be understood by all and applied consistently for them to be effective. Try not to break these rules yourself, remember your children are looking to you as a role model for how to behave!

Relationships

Building connections and giving children your time and attention is the best thing that you can do as a parent and this situation may actually make it easier to do this. Even 15 minutes of 1-1 undivided attention can make all the difference. Speak positively, listen carefully and give your child opportunities to chat and choose what they would like to do with you. Make time to do some fun activities together, paint a picture, bake some biscuits, ride a bike or kick a ball!

Anxiety

These are difficult times for all of us so find someone you can talk to about how you are feeling and try to avoid social media that makes you feel panicked. Be open and listen to your children too as they will look to you for support and reassurance. Sometimes anxiety in children can display as angry or controlling behaviour. Let them know that you understand how they feel and that their feelings are ok (although their behaviour may not be!) Explain that you have these feelings too and reassure them that you will be there for them no matter what. You may want to practise

some calming techniques together, there are lots of great relaxation resources for families online. Physical activity is another great way to tackle stress and anxiety and release happy hormones. Make sure your children exercise daily and try to plan regular activities you can do together.

Responsibility and Chores

Give your children simple jobs and responsibilities, just make sure it is something they are able to do. Praise them when they complete their jobs and add them to your daily or weekly routines. It's a great opportunity for children to learn some key life skills and will help to ease your load!

When things go wrong...

Try to catch unsettled or challenging behaviour as early as possible. Redirect them to another task or give your attention to the positive rather than the negative. Feel like screaming? Give yourself a 10-second pause. Breathe in and out slowly five times, then try to respond in a calmer way. This helps – a lot! If you lose your cool don't worry, you are human! You can say sorry and start again – modelling the behaviour that you want your children to learn.

Self-Care

You can't look after others if you don't look after yourself first. Your own wellbeing is vitally important for your family. Take time out when you need to, chat with friends and family and don't be ashamed to put yourself first sometimes. Try not to be too hard on yourself, there is no such thing as a perfect parent and we all make mistakes!

Further Support

- **Advice about conflict, calming activities and parenting resources**
www.familylives.co.uk
Helpline 0808 800 2222
www.nspcc.org.uk
- **Support for mental health & wellbeing**
<https://youngminds.org.uk>
Helpline 0808 802 5544