



A practical guide to supporting children and young people

Our fabulous counselling team have put together some useful tips for supporting children and young people through the current roller coaster of emotions they are likely to be feeling right now. We hope these tools provide some support to carers and parents across the country during these difficult times.

Counsellor Tips:

Talk to your child about their worries and feelings. Find out how much they already know and follow their lead. Drawing stories and playing games may help them to open up. Don't minimize or avoid their concerns. Acknowledge their feelings and assure them that it's natural to feel scared about these things. Demonstrate that you're listening by giving them your full attention, and make sure they understand that they can talk to you whenever they like.

Be honest: explain the truth in a child-friendly way. If you can't answer their questions, don't guess. Use it as an opportunity to explore the answers together

When we're seeing lots of troubling images on TV or online, it can sometimes feel like the crisis is all around us. Children may not distinguish between images on screen and their own personal reality, and they may believe they're in imminent danger. You can help your children cope with the stress by making opportunities for them to play and relax, when possible. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment.

Useful links:

- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/my-hero-you>
- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/6-ways-parents-can-support-their-kids-through-coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-parenting-tips>
- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-protect-your-familys-mental-health-face-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

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Uplifting Activities:

Create a COVID-19 Time Capsule:

Create your own COVID-19 Time Capsule - a free downloadable activity created by Natalie Long of LONG Creations who decided that it would be fun to make a little time capsule of this life event we are all living through. Available for free download for both children and adults: <https://s3.letsembark.ca/long-creations/2020-COVID-19-Time-Capsule-EN-US.pdf>



Create a Feeling box:

Encourage all family members to write down their feelings and place them in the box throughout the day (good, sad, difficult emotions). Set a time towards the end of the day to sit down together and talk about the feelings and emotions that were placed in the box.

Create a worry tree:

Talking about a worry, writing it down and putting on the branches of trees, encouraging them to let go of that worry. This resource can help children engage with and talk about their feelings, their worries and their fears. Sometimes for children it can be hard to understand their feelings and it can feel really big for them. Printable worry tree available at: <https://www.kiddycharts.com/printables/printable-worry-tree/>

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Create a worry doll:

Use small sticks, twigs or ice-cream sticks, use wool, ribbon or thread and pens.

Instructions:

- Break your stick into small lengths
- Wrap different colours of wool, ribbon or thread around your stick, tie of the ends.
- Felt tip a face onto your doll.
- Children can tell their worries to their dolls and leave their dolls somewhere they choose to overnight.

The dolls will look after and take away their worries whilst children sleep.

Create a self-sooth box:

Using a shoe box, or any other type of box you have at home. The box can be decorated or left plain.

Place inside the box anything that can distract and sooth in times of stress. Encourage the child to place things inside that helps them to feel calm and calm their senses (smell, sound, touch, taste, sight). This can include:

Smell: soap, lotion, tee-shirt

Touch: fluffy socks, teddy, soft material, play-doh

Taste: lollipop, mint to taste,

Vision: a picture of a memory, favourite holiday, colouring pens and book, lyrics of a song

Sound: noisy toy, music

When the child feels under pressure, sad or stressed take out the box for them to use, holding the items for a few minutes to help calm and relax.