



Support for teachers during the COVID-19 outbreak

FEELING ANXIOUS

We're all on edge because of the coronavirus. Our daily lives have been disrupted, we aren't sure what tomorrow may bring, and for many of us the nonstop news and social media coverage isn't always helpful.

As a teacher you are a key worker which can bring additional stress to an already difficult time, and you may not always feel you can keep as safe as you like. Please make sure you take any safety concerns to your head teacher.

First of all thank you for the work you are doing to help the country fight this disease.

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TOLERATING UNCERTAINTY

It is normal to feel anxious in a time like this, as there is a lot of uncertainty and change.

You are likely to be working in a different way than you are used to and managing the worries and anxiety of the children and families that you work with.

This booklet will aim to give you some tips on how to manage this. If you need further support please feel free to contact the CAMHS practitioner advice line: 01452 894272

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KEEPING INFORMED

Be smart about what you're reading.

While we should make sure we are informed about how best to keep our families safe, we should also be thoughtful about what we are reading online to make sure it's helpful. It is easy to inadvertently get sucked into reading every update as it comes in or clicking on 'fake news.'

Consider putting a limit on the number of articles you read, or for how long you will read about the coronavirus each day. If you're consuming media that is making you anxious — pictures of lines at stores, people hoarding supplies, celebrities getting diagnosed — take a break. Being informed is one thing; being over exposed is another.

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Remote working

Not everyone has an office at home but make sure you create a good working environment for yourself.

- If possible, work at a table with a chair that supports your back.
- If using a laptop use books to raise it up so you aren't slouched over.
- If you can, work near a window.
- Keep your usual routine as much as possible.
- Have clear guidelines for when to work and when to walk away and return to other things in your life.
- Maintaining a normal working pattern is advisable as it supports your health and wellbeing.
- Try to get ready as if you are going to work and don't sit down to your desk before you usually would. If you've got extra time have a coffee or do a quick meditation.



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SELF HELP IDEAS



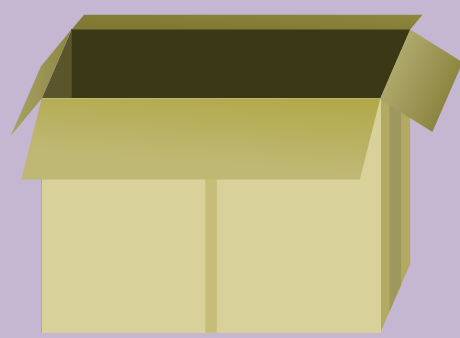
**STOP YOURSELF
IF YOU NOTICE
THAT YOU ARE
GETTING
CARRIED AWAY
WITH "WHAT
IFS."**

**HAVING A
ROUTINE THAT
INVOLVES
EXERCISE,
REGULAR MEALS
AND HEALTHY
AMOUNTS OF
SLEEP ARE ALSO
CRUCIAL TO
REGULATING
OUR MOODS AND
OUR WORRIES.**

**FOCUS ON
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING RIGHT
NOW.**

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19

As teachers you will be aware of your key role in helping children understand what is going on, providing information and reassurance. Covid-19 is making many children (and adults) feel unsafe. Much of the information that children hear about Covid-19 is intended for adults. Because children don't understand risk in the same way that adults do many children are unsure of how worried they should be but many are very worried indeed -about themselves, their parents, grandparents, their pets, and their friends.



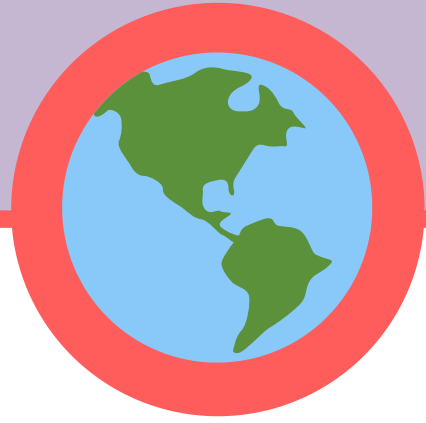
As you will all know, how much a child understands depends on their developmental stage. Therefore we all need to talk to them about what is happening at the right level for them. Below is some guidance based on age but your judgement will be needed as to whether developmentally they are at the stage you would expect for their chronological age.



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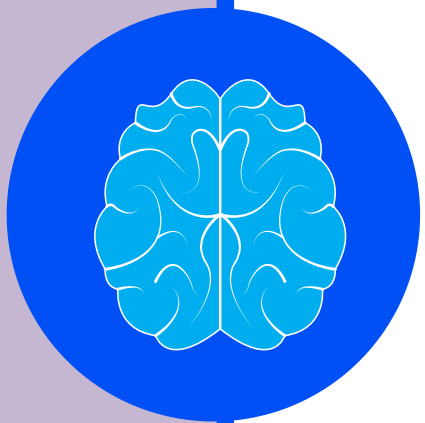
Talking to children 4-7



Children are focused on their immediate environment – what is going on around them, what is happening next and soon, and how they feel right now.

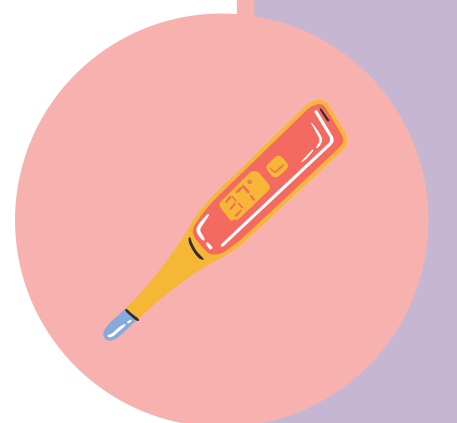


They will struggle to understand that symptoms of illnesses may be different – such as the idea that some coughs are OK, and others are more serious.

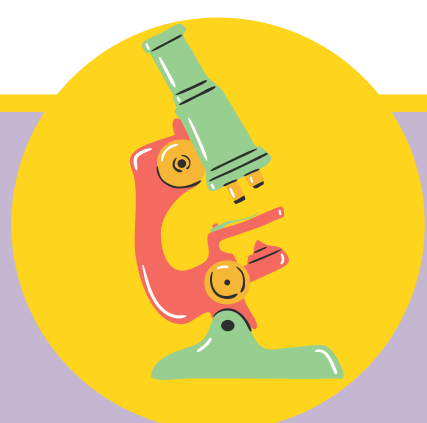


They will struggle to understand concepts that they cannot picture in their mind.

They will understand illness in terms of simple symptoms, like a cough or runny nose.



Complicated things like illnesses they can't see may be difficult to understand.



They will know that some behaviours can help keep you healthy, like washing your hands, however they might get confused and think it will definitely stop you getting ill.



Helping kids aged 4-7

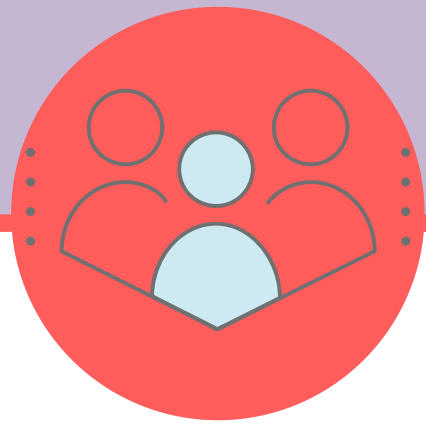
- Use play and stories to shape a child's understanding, where necessary and appropriate. Characters in the story can be used to correct misunderstandings.
- Make sure that the child understands cause and effect (e.g. washing hands may help stop germs spreading rather than will stop).
- Answers do not need to be increasingly complex -if you have said enough to the child, repeat the information you have given consistently. If you are not sure or don't know, say so instead of making something up!
- Help the child label and name their emotions by labelling and naming yours.



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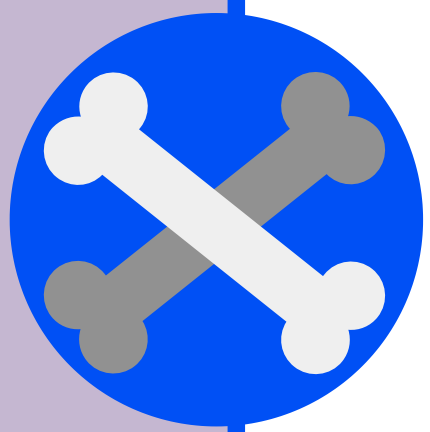
Talking to children 7-12



Children can now see themselves as different to others and understand that other people have different needs and perspectives.



Children still think about things from their own perspective so will be influenced mainly by that.



They have an understanding that illness can be lots of different symptoms, and that lots of things go on inside their body which they can't see.

They understand that medicines and following doctor's advice can help them get better but still need a lot of help and prompting to follow advice.

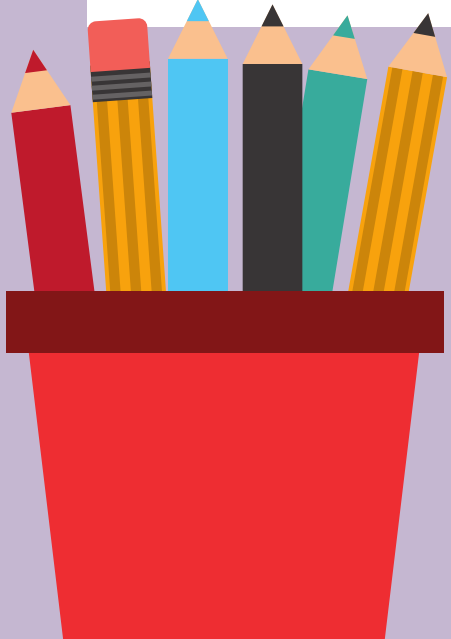


They are more able to understand concepts of time and permanence, and will understand that death happens to everyone and is permanent.



Helping kids aged 7-12

- Encourage emotional expression through drawing, stories, questions – a feelings box where children can write down their questions and thoughts and discuss them with an adult can be helpful.
- Normalise different feelings appropriately and talk about what you are doing to help with your worries or feelings.
- Make sure children are active (provided they are well) – this gets rid of some of the chemicals in the body which are released when we are anxious and will help with physical symptoms of stress.
- Make sure children don't take on adult roles in a desire to help others.
- Ensure explanations are accurate and explain differences between conditions e.g. children may have heard that having a cough might be worrying, and they will need to understand that not all coughs are worrying.

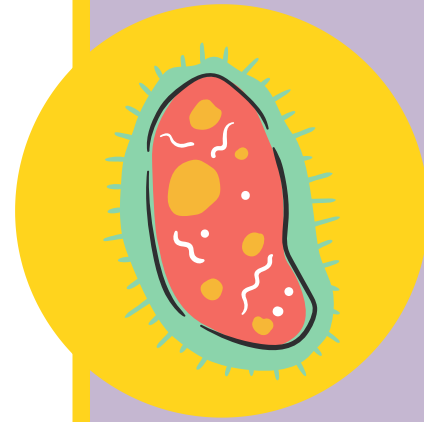


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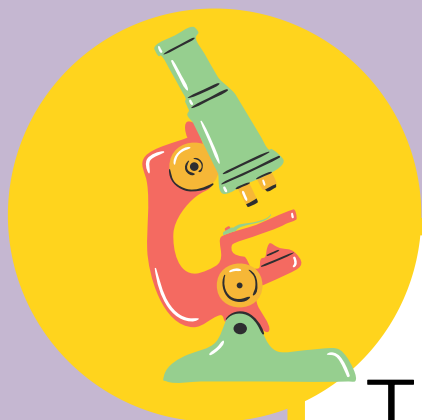
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Talking to children 13+

At this age, children have a good understanding of time, they can imagine the future and lots of possibilities. As a result, their imagination may mean they are able to worry more about things that haven't happened or might not happen.



They are likely to look at their own sources of information and ask their parents



Teenagers are developing their own identity and a sense of who they are in the world.



Teenagers are still mainly influenced by their friends – so even though they can understand a lot of information about illness, what their friends are doing and saying may impact on how they behave.



Helping kids aged 13+

Continue to offer space for support, affection and discussion.

- Ask open questions such as, 'What did you think of the news that...?'
- Provide them with information from reputable sources 'I came across this today, what do you think of it?'
- Support social opportunities and discussion with peers.
- Offer choice and promote independence within the context of what is possible and appropriate – if a teenager can't go out, giving more choice about activity within the home can be helpful.
- Suggest ways of helping others that are safe and appropriate.
- Offer reframes about worries – how can the young person think differently about the situation which helps them find a positive in the situation?



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Helping kids with additional needs

Social Stories can be a helpful way of sharing information in an accurate and reassuring way. The following links are to two Social Stories which may cover the main issues surrounding Coronavirus.

The stories are generic Social Stories, however all Social Stories should be tailored to an individual child's needs and level of understanding (e.g. simpler language or shorter stories). Stories should also be tailored towards the specific issue that a child may need some help in understanding (e.g. how the virus is spread or how to wash hands effectively).

These stories are meant as templates from which parents and carers can also adapt to suit their individual child.



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Resources for kids with additional needs

Links:

'Learning about the Coronavirus'

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Learning-About-the-Corona-Virus-by-Dr.-Siobhan-Timmins.pdf>

'Pandemics and the Coronavirus'

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>

Additional Resources

Podcast regarding helping children with Autism during Covid-19:

https://www.acamh.org/podcasts/coronavirus-autism-a-parents-guide/?utm_source=Subscriber&utm_campaign=0401ae5288-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_12_02_03_10_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f59ca1eb20-0401ae5288-119324701

National Autistic Society, resources for autistic people and families:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources/helpful-resources.aspx>

National Autistic Society, Top tips for Families:

https://www.autism.org.uk/~media/nas/our-services/coronavirus/tips_for_families_covid19.ashx?la=en-gb

General resources

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2&fbclid=IwAR2eRQ0UMNpnY7nrfhIN-GKSc5DuNn36dwvLuFWJfFMpkFGmjgj-rxe8nhU

<https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-children-young-people-and-families>

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/coronavirus-outbreak/coronavirus-outbreak-facts-tips-how-to-help-protect-children>

<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus>

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/patients-and-parents/coronavirus-resources-for-children-and-families/>

The place2be link also has links to Newsround programmes for younger children on Covid-19:

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-information-for-children/>



Local support:
<https://www.ghll.org.uk/>
<https://ticplus.org.uk/>
<https://www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk/>

This booklet was created by Young Minds Matter Gloucestershire, part of the School's Mental Health Support Team.

