

# Supporting Your Child in a Global Pandemic

## Reassure them

When you talk, try to:

- Listen to their worries and take them seriously – what they're thinking and feeling is important, and should be respected.
- Let them know that it's okay to feel worried, scared or angry. Tell them that sometimes you feel worried too, and that a certain amount worry is normal.
- Acknowledge if their worries are very unlikely – not by saying 'it's fine', but with facts.
- Recognise this is a tough time for young people. They may miss their friends and partners or be worried about what their future holds.



## Help them get the facts

Use facts from trustworthy sources, like the [NHS](#) or the government. You can visit these pages for the latest government guidance:

- [UK Government guidance on coronavirus restrictions across England.](#)
- [Welsh Government guidance on coronavirus restrictions across Wales.](#)



Or you could offer to watch an unbiased news source together, such as [BBC News](#). This will help to challenge any incorrect information they may have heard.

If you're worried about how much news they are seeing or where they are getting information from, encourage them to limit their intake by only checking at a certain time of the day or consider avoiding certain sites that aren't helpful.

## How can I help my teen stay safe online?

Most of us are spending more time online at the moment.

If you're worried about your teen staying safe online, here's some things to consider:

- Encouraging your teen to balance the amount of time they spend on their phone with other activities can be challenging, especially when they are spending a lot of time at home.
- Setting rules around your own screen time, such as thinking about how often you check the news or social media, could help you to promote healthy boundaries.



- Try to involve your teen in discussions around screen time. For example, you could ask them how they feel increased screen time may affect their wellbeing.

### Social Media

Social media can help your teen to stay in touch with friends or partners, but it might also make them feel anxious, worried, upset or like they are missing out.

If social media is making them feel like this, you could suggest that they take a break or limit their social media use.

You could also suggest they change what they look at. For example, they might decide to view particular groups or pages but not scroll through timelines or newsfeeds.

### Online Safety

We know it can be difficult to talk about online safety with your teen.

The [NSPCC has information on talking to young people about online safety](#), to support you in conversations with your teen.

### How can I support my teen's wellbeing?

Your teen might be feeling a mixture of emotions about coronavirus and the current situation, and this can be really worrying and stressful for both of you.



We're living through a period of change and uncertainty, so **it's natural to feel upset or unsure about what you should do.**

You're not alone and there are lots of things you can try to support your teen:

- Your teen might be feeling a mixture of emotions right now.
- However, they're feeling, it's important to acknowledge their thoughts and emotions.

You could try to:

- Suggest mindfulness or journaling as a way for them to process their thoughts.
- Help them to manage their worries by having time set aside each day for 'worry time', where they can talk to you about how they are feeling.
- Ask them what advice they would give to a friend who was feeling worried.
- If they are feeling anxious, encourage them to try simple breathing techniques, such as breathing in for a count of four and breathing out for a count of seven.
- Share what helps you when you feel anxious or stressed, for example doing some exercise or going for a walk in nature. Encourage them to see if this helps them to manage their feelings.

- Focus on things they can control, like choosing how they spend their free time, and following guidelines to help others.
- Remind them that events like this don't happen often, and it won't be forever.
- Encourage them to exercise, perhaps you could do this together.

### **Encourage them to connect with friends and loved ones**

They are probably missing seeing friends, partners and family members they haven't seen in a while.

Encourage your teen to virtually connect with their friends, partners and family. You could also try to be more lenient with their mobile phone and social media use if it's helping them feel connected.

### **Empower them to do things they can do**

Their lives have changed a lot over the past year – exams have been cancelled, they've been apart from their friends and family, and they may feel unsafe at the prospect of catching the coronavirus.

It may help to:

- Encourage them to do what they can to look after themselves and other people.
- Try meditation through apps like Headspace -this can help teens who are suffering with anxiety
- Include your children when talking about looking after older relatives and shopping for essentials – such as what can and can't be bought, and if they can help.
- Encourage them to find ways to exercise safely, either on their own or as a family, for both their physical and mental wellbeing.

### **Respect their boundaries**

Spending more time at home might make your teen feel like they've lost their independence, and this will be difficult for them.

Try to find ways to spend time together without always being on top of each other. For example, you could sit together while you're both doing different activities, or have a family board game or walk once a week.

You should respect their need to spend time on their own, too.

### **Think Ahead to the Future**

We don't know how long the coronavirus pandemic will impact our day-to-day lives, but we do know that this won't last forever.

Help your teen to focus on what they can control. For example, you could encourage them to make plans for the weekends and life after lockdown. Knowing what to expect may help them to worry less.

Planning some fun activities together will also help them have something for you both to look forward to. Noting plans on a calendar could increase a sense of optimism.

### If they are worried about returning to school

- Ask them how they feel about going into school, and if there's anything you can do together to make the situation better for them.
- Listen to how they're feeling and don't dismiss them.
- Share our information about managing feelings about lockdown changing with your teen.
- Reassure your child that everything that can be done is being done to ensure your child is safe when they are in school
- Remind your child of the positives that will arise from them being back in school
- Encourage your child to make a list of what they are looking forward to about returning to school

More information: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/coronavirus/supporting-your-teens-wellbeing-during-coronavirus/>

