

## Parenting During Lockdown

Being a parent is not easy under normal circumstances - as much as we love them, there are times when our children can really test our patience.

What is happening right now is unprecedented.

There are so many unknowns. It can be anxiety provoking and feel extremely scary for everybody.

A lot of our established strategies to entertain our children and manage stress (going to the park/McDonalds/visiting friends and relatives) have been removed in addition to many of the things we might do to stay on top/unwind - which potentially makes being a parent even harder.

It's important to keep in mind that as strange and scary as it is for us, it is equally so for our children. And this may result in them 'acting out' more than normal.

If you are struggling with behavior try and remember your child is very likely to be feeling

- afraid
- bewildered
- confused
- frustrated

I have included lots of information in the hope that it might offer some support in getting you through this strange time.

Firstly, it's important to talk to your children about the Coronavirus - there is lots of advice on line on how to do this including [YOUNGMINDS.ORG.UK](http://YOUNGMINDS.ORG.UK) (I typed in '**How to explain Coronavirus to kids...**')

Having to stay at home and find ways to keep your children occupied, (see separate sheet for some ideas) explaining why for the 100<sup>th</sup> time that

McDonalds and the park are closed and 'No we can't go and visit Grandma/Aunty Sue/Dylan etc.' and then managing their understandable responses is very likely going to take its toll on you and we are all going to have to dig deep when it comes to patience.

We are more likely to lose it when we feel stressed/under pressure. And we are far more likely to feel stressed and under pressure at this time.

In recognizing that we're all feeling scared, unsettled and frustrated it's really important to do as much as we can to cope well right now and keep everybody safe.

Children who argue back at parents or throw a temper tantrum can easily set a parent off. If you feel angry and out of control, leave the situation immediately if you can. Leave the room calmly and say, "I'll be in the next room/ garden when you want to talk more respectfully' - go into another room/garden and do your best to calm down (see separate info) It's far easier to you find an alternative or solution to the problem when you are able to withdraw from the conflict. If you can't leave the situation, then do your best to mentally step back and count to ten.

In terms of tantrums, children frequently throw them when they feel uninformed or powerless in a situation, and these feelings will be very likely right now. One strategy to help prevent them is to inform children ahead of time. Rather than telling your child to come off his game/turn the TV off now, give some notice, "In 10 minutes you need to finish the game/turn the TV off" and then remind after 5. This allows the child to complete what he was in the process of doing and avoid a row. Make sure to acknowledge with positive praise/reward system of your choice when they do what you ask.

There is more information/strategies to manage behavior on separate sheets.

I have also included information on developing Emotional Literacy - encouraging our children to communicate how they are feeling is essential for good mental health, and even more so now.

Many of us, both adults and children manage varying levels of anxiety on a daily basis. During this time levels of anxiety are likely to be increased.

Strategies to help relax and stay calm are useful (see separate sheet) but when anxiety is too difficult to manage one way to gain control of it is using a Grounding Tool. You can use this with your children too if they are struggling. I have included this tool on a separate sheet.

If you are struggling here is a list of useful numbers

- Family Lives is a national charity providing help and support in all aspects of family. They have lots of advice on managing under the current circumstances. Visit their website @[familylives.org.uk](https://familylives.org.uk)/email [askus@familylives.org.uk](mailto:askus@familylives.org.uk) or tel. 0808 800 2222
- Samaritans 116 123
- Domestic Violence Hotline 0808 2000 247
- Mind 0300 123 3393
- Young Minds 020 7089 5050/[Youngminds.org](https://www.youngminds.org)
- Age UK 0800 123

Take care of you and your family by adhering to government guidelines - make the most of the daily exercise permitted but be safe.

Stay Well

Rachel