

Tips to share with children to help them cope with the new normal



Dr Liz Gregory

We are used to life staying pretty much the same – doing the same things, going to the same places and seeing the same people. That has changed with Coronavirus; and we are all having to get used to life being very different – a ‘new normal’ for a few weeks at least.

It is the same for everyone; and so we are all getting used to it together.

Doing this in a **C*A*L*M** way will help everyone to get used to it more quickly, and also help everyone to feel less worried generally.

C*A*L*M

C – Create new routines

Routines help us feel safe. Usually we don’t even notice them, and we often take them for granted. But we really miss them when they are gone. Making new routines will be very important over the coming days and weeks as they will help us feel safe. They become the new normal surprisingly quickly – just think of a time when you have been on holiday or to

stay with a relative. What are the new routines you are starting to notice?



Some celebrities are helping with **exercise, stories or cookery lessons on-line** at different times during the day – can you use these to help create a routine as well as seeing a familiar face and trying something new?

Some teachers are sending work so that you can have **school lessons at home** – can you do these at the same time of day you used to do them at school?



Some friends and relatives are using **facetime** and other ways to be in touch so that you can still **see and hear them** – can you arrange a time to ‘meet up’ on a regular basis?

Mealtimes and **bedtime** are a really important part of everyone’s routine, especially at a time like this. It is tempting to say they matter less as we don’t have to be anywhere on time; but actually they are more important than ever. They make sure that we eat healthily and get enough sleep – the key to us feeling happy and well.



Some families are using **timers** as a fun way to make sure they stick to their new routines and move to a different activity, room, or the garden at different times during the day. Have you got something you could use as a timer? Alexa is brilliant, or an alarm clock or a kitchen buzzer?

It helps us if we do set things at set times in the day because it gives us something to look forward to. It makes sure we do different types of things during the day instead of just doing the same thing. It helps us do the things we are less keen on but need to do, and it keeps us busy so we have less time to focus on our worries.

What does your new routine look like?

A – Ask a grown up

If you have any **questions** or **worries** it helps to **share them with a grown-up or older brother or sister**. They may not have all the answers but knowing someone cares and is listening is often the most important thing when we have something that is bothering us.

There is so much news about Coronavirus and it is always changing so it is really important that we try to **switch off** from it most of the time. If you want an update stick to places like Newsround for information you know that you can trust.



If worries are going around and around in your head, then sometimes **writing them down** or **drawing them** can help. Some children find

making a **'worry box'** really helpful so that you can keep them in one place and put a lid on them, and even give them to a grown-up to look after. If worries are taking over then use a timer to give yourself a **'worry ten minutes'** in your routine to try and make sure they don't take up the whole day. Some children find drawing their favourite **super hero or a 'worry monster' to stick on their bedroom door** can help protect them from worrying at night.



One of the most helpful ways of managing worries is **to divide them into things you can do something about and things you can't do anything about.** With Coronavirus there is lots that we can't control but you **can** wash your hands at the recommended times, you **can** cough into your elbow and you **can** keep a safe space away from people when you go outside. Maybe you have learnt about **mindfulness** in school and can make time for it in your new routine. You can teach it to the grown-ups in your house too! If it is not something you know about maybe you can learn about it online. It is a good skill for helping you to **relax** and gets much easier to do the more you practice.

If you have a big worry and don't feel you can tell the grown-ups you live with then can you

telephone or message an adult you trust? All the people who cared about you before lockdown are still around and thinking about you. For big worries you can also contact a helpline like **Childine.**

L - Lovely activities

The best way to keep worries in their place is to **fill your time with things you love!** Now is the time to search through your cupboards to find **games, books and activities** you had forgotten about or didn't get around to. Old activities you used to do when you were younger can be particularly comforting at a time like this. Make a list of new things you want to try – there are lots of brilliant **art, craft, music and sport** ideas online. It really is a chance to let your imagination take over and involve the whole family! Maybe use the alphabet to make a list of things you can all try! Cut them out and put them in a box so each day feels like a surprise.



A favourite **film** or a favourite **book** or **story** is a great way to escape into another world for a bit, or looking through **old photographs** is a lovely way of remembering happy times.

Being kind to yourself by doing things you love, and treating others kindly is more

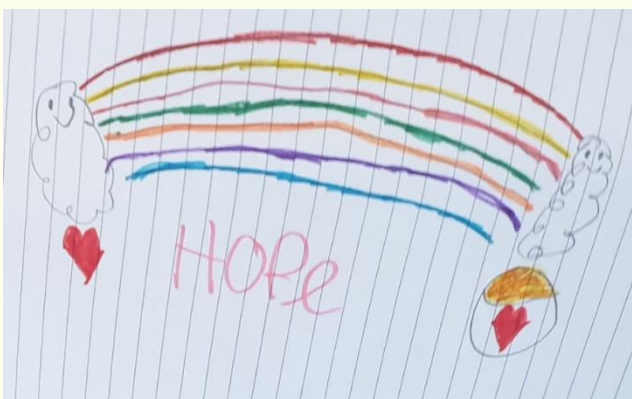
important than ever. Doing kind things for people in your family will make them feel amazing; and it will make you feel amazing too!

M - Making the most of it

Everyone is missing out on lots of things because of Coronavirus. **Feeling sad, angry, cross, fed up, frightened, and upset and just about every other emotion are all very understandable.** Everyone will be feeling like this from time to time. Doing something physical like **running, jumping** or even **punching a pillow** can help.

We can also try to think about it another way – **Coronavirus has given us all a chance do the things you don't usually get around to.**

Everybody in the country is in the same situation – and actually all across the world. This is an important time in history – how are you going to remember what you did to get through it so that you can tell people in the future, and maybe even your own children? Perhaps you could keep a special **journal** or **vlog**? Already ideas are spreading – like the rainbows in windows and the clap for the NHS. **What else can we spread around the world?**



C

A

L

M