



Coping with worries about children's education

Many parents have had concerns about their children's education during the Coronavirus pandemic. The situation we find ourselves faced with is unique and we are all trying to do our best to ensure children are supported now and going forward to enable them to cope, build resilience and thrive in this new way of life. Below are some tips to help reassure you and your children when it comes to concerns about education.

Keep communication open

Changes in routine, not seeing their friends and extended family and overhearing news reports can impact on your child. Talk with your child about the current changes and restrictions while bearing in mind their level of understanding and reassuring them that they are safe with you, that this situation won't last forever and that their friends are probably experiencing the same emotions as them.

Remember your child's emotions

Just like adults children will have good and not so good days. Bear this in mind when trying to engage them in home schooling. If today is a day when your child is worried or overwhelmed take a break from home schooling and take steps to boost their and your mood instead.

Acknowledge feelings

Showing your child you understand how they feel is important. Allow children to talk about feelings and to offer reassurance that they and you family are following the recommended steps to avoid the virus. Some children find having a worry jar where they can write their worries on a piece of paper and place in the jar helps.

Structure and boundaries

Children need to feel safe to learn so it's important that we provide structure and boundaries as these help children feel secure. Studies show that keeping to a regular routine can help us feel upbeat. Your new routine may look different to the one you had previously before the pandemic so find what works for you and your child. This could mean later start times, more regular breaks and shorter hours spent on school work.





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Managing stress

Home schooling can be stressful. Parents can feel like they have to maintain the standard of learning their child receives in the classroom. Try not to put yourself under that pressure, this sets unrealistic expectations that if not met can result in us feeling inadequate, guilty or pressured. Children will pick up on our feelings of stress and may in turn feel worried or stressed, or they may refuse to engage with learning at all. Instead of getting stressed, try to think about using a mix of mediums to make learning fun. This doesn't have to mean putting a lot more time and effort into learning at home, your child will learn through play and everyday activities.

Help with understanding work

Older children may be concerned about falling behind or not understanding work set by teachers. This is not an easy time for schools either and the vast majority are working hard to set work and projects which they believe to be within your child's year group's understanding and capability. The best thing you can do is support your child by showing interest in their learning, assisting them with tasks they find challenging and using the opportunity to build their self esteem and resilience. Some parents may actually find their child excels in this new learning environment.

Transitions

If your child is in the transition year they may feel they have missed out on a lot of activities that are important to them such as marking the end of an era and the start of a new one. Help your child come up with a solution to some of these disappointments. Can they come up with an idea for a get together either online or socially distanced in small groups or can they make a scrapbook or short video clip of their memories from primary school? Remind them of the history they are creating by being the first year group to transfer during the pandemic.

Teenagers

Teenagers are often expected to keep on top of their learning independently. Do let them know that you are happy to offer help if they need some.

If your teenager refuses to do any school work and regards the current situation as an extended holiday try talking with them, helping them recognise the benefits of completing school work, revisit rules and consequences and negotiate a compromise.

