

Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing

COVID-19 continues to shape who we can see and what we can do - at home, school, work and play. No-one really knows yet what the long-term impact, if any, will be on children. What is known though, is that a caring, consistent and open parent or carer, who is coping as positively as they can, is likely important. The evidence shows that this relationship helps support children's resilience and wellbeing when they adapt to big changes, whatever they are.

However, snap lockdowns can put pressure on these relationships when stuck at home together on short notice. Here are some tips ...

Listen and Involve

Check in regularly with each child. Listen carefully: their concerns might be different to what you expect. Calmly acknowledge and validate their feelings. Then problem solve together as best you can, such as around different ways to stay connected to friends or ideas for a virtual birthday party. Working together supports wellbeing and models positive coping, creative problem-solving and shared decision-making. These are important resilience skills.

Get Outside, Get Active

Exercise reduces stress and boosts mental health. Get everyone active outside as much as the regulations will allow and, where possible, spend time in parks or nature.

Make Memories

Ongoing lockdowns and restrictions can be frustrating and tiring but they won't last forever. Try to keep using these times to try out new things you may not usually do together, such as, games nights or virtual meals with grandparents or friends.

Be Present

Put down your phone, turn off the TV. Put thoughts of the crisis aside. To have quality time together, really be there.

Do Things Together ... and Apart

Make sure there are times every day when you are each doing your own thing. Try the handy Octopus Tool. It can help kids learn to manage boredom positively and independently.

Keep in mind: Home is not a safe place for all children or for some adult/s who care for them. Where this is the case, many of the suggestions above won't likely make it safer. Please seek support from organisations set up to assist families where safety is a concern due to 'stay at home' requirements with ongoing lockdowns.



Managing Big Feelings

Worried? Upset? Bored? Frustrated? It's normal. Feelings like these are important. They let us know when something doesn't feel right and can help remind us to do important things, like wash our hands or call Grandma to cheer her up. Sometimes though, feelings take over our behaviour. Other times, we can get stuck in our thoughts and feelings and it stops us having fun or making the best of the situation. This handy Octopus Tool provides some steps for managing feelings in a positive way. It can be helpful for parents, carers and kids stuck at home. And, for learning emotional literacy.

Handy Octopus Tool

1. Draw an octopus shape and choose an emotion that's bothering you.
2. Think of 8 things you like to do and that you can do by yourself. The more unusual and creative the better! Draw or write them on the tentacles.
3. Stick your octopus somewhere you can find it easily.
4. Now the tricky part ... notice when you are feeling the emotion. Don't try to stop or ignore it, just spot it. Then choose one or more of the activities from your octopus instead.
5. Make a new octopus as often as you want. Try different designs if you prefer - spider, jellyfish, flower, stack of cards ...

★ Top Tip:

It's not always easy to know how you feel, but often your body or behaviour is showing you. For example, if you are whining, feeling grumpy, looking for a snack or bugging others you might be feeling bored. That is a good time to look for your octopus.

When I feel bored I can ...

Go on a garden safari

Make a short movie

Learn a magic trick

Play with our pet

Dance like a pirate

Build the longest marble run

Talk to
Draw a picture

★ Keep Talking and Listening

Check in regularly with how each other is feeling about the situation. If you are concerned that you really aren't coping it is important to seek professional advice (many services are available on-line or by phone).

★ Top Tip for Parent/Carers:

Make sure you lay out the resources so children can find these themselves when they need to.

