

How to support your child's learning and wellbeing at home

OneEducation
Putting children first



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This advice is provided by One Education Virtual School Educational Psychology Team, and it is for parents and carers of vulnerable children and young people, particularly children in care, who may find themselves at home at this challenging time. It is in the hope that the home setting may remain a safe, inspiring and positive place for learning and wellbeing for all young people in Manchester.

Structure and Routine

It may be helpful to establish some structure and routines to your "school" week, wherever possible.



1. **Setting Up a Family Meeting** – calling a family meeting is important to set ground rules and expectations for the duration of this situation. Ask all to participate and look into what is their understanding of the situation, what this means and why are we doing it. This will give everyone a sense of purpose and meaning. Validate emotions as children may feel like things are not fair. Write together a poster with ground rules, decide of the ground rules together, like how many hours of devices and games for example, chores, cooking and ask everyone's contribution to family household.
2. **Setting Up a Schedule** – Having a calendar or a visual schedule outlining different activities will help create a routine and establish predictability. It can be done visually using colour coded signs, see picture above. Although not necessarily needing to be equally disperse across the day, deciding on a schedule together will help family functioning. You may want to make the timetable more visual, to support your child's understanding and where your child/ren need extra support in managing transitions.

3. **Deciding on Different Activities** – When discussing different activities, it is important to ensure that all family members’ needs are met. For younger children, this may need play and unstructured times, as for older children, it may mean learning online with structured educational activities set by the school. For parents, it may need some time to work and communicate with colleagues. Remember it is also important to allow for self-care and time for you, like putting the oxygen mask on you before someone else!

Connect through attuned interaction behaviours

Attunement is being aware of, and responsive to, another. There are many ways you can interact with your child in an attunement-friendly way. Here are some ideas.

Being attentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking interested with friendly posture • Giving time and space for other • Wondering about what they are doing, thinking or feeling • Enjoying watching them
Encouraging initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting • Listening actively • Showing emotional warmth through intonation • Naming positively what you see, think or feel • Using friendly and/or playful intonation as appropriate • Saying what you are doing • Looking for initiatives
Receiving initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing you have heard, noticed their initiative • Receiving with body-language • Being friendly and/or playful as appropriate • Returning eye-contact, smiling, nodding in response • Receiving what they are saying or doing with words • Repeating/using their words or phrases
Developing Attuned interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving and then responding • Checking they are understanding you • Waiting attentively for your turn. • Having fun • Giving a second (and further) turn on same topic • Giving and taking short turns • Contributing to interaction / activity equally • Co-operating - helping each other
Guiding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolding • Extending, building on their response • Judging the amount of support required and adjusting • Giving information when needed • Providing help when needed • Offering choices that they can understand • Making suggestions that they can follow
Deepening discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting goal-setting • Sharing viewpoints • Collaborative discussion and problem-solving • Naming difference of opinion. • Investigating the intentions behind words • Naming contradictions/conflicts (real or potential) • Reaching new shared understandings • Managing conflict (back to Being attentive and receive initiatives aiming to restore attuned interactions)

Learning at home

Paired reading



Paired reading helps children to make more sense of what they read so it becomes more interesting. Paired reading also helps children to read more fluently. It also makes reading more fun and helps struggling readers to feel more confident.

- Choose a book which is funny or interesting and just a little harder than one your child reads by him/herself. Allow the child to choose their own book if this is appropriate.
- Read with your child for about 10 minutes, 5 times per week or 20 minutes 3 times per week.
- Flick through the book first with your child if you want to, to get an idea of the story.
- Ask your child to put his/her finger under the words and follow along as you read.
- You **BOTH** need to read out loud **TOGETHER**.
- You will have to read a bit slower than normal so that the child can read with you.
- If your child can read confidently without you, ask him/her to nudge or tap you so you know to stop reading and let him/her continue on his/her own.
- If he/she stumbles or hesitates at a word, say the word and carry on reading out loud together. Until the child nudges or taps you again.
- When the time is up, ask the child some questions about the book. Give the child LOTS of praise. You could make a 'Paired Reading' chart and put stickers on it every time you read.
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Online learning

The Internet can be an amazing source of connection, creativity and learning. The school which your child attends may have provided ideas around online learning and

websites. However, children and young people still need guidance to stay safe online. As a parent or carer you may feel that the technical skills of the child in your carer far outweigh yours, but you can still provide valuable advice and protection. Discuss with your child the importance of keeping personal information safe, reporting inappropriate conversations, messages, images and behaviours and how this can be done. Not all online content is suitable for all ages, so monitoring what your child is accessing can be helpful. Having regular conversations about online friends' lists for example via social media or gaming is also useful, as well as helping your child to feel comfortable to report cyber bullying that they or anyone else experience.

Here are some links and ideas:

A website full of support for schools/parents/learning activity ideas for a range of ages

chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/resources-list-for-home-learning

For families of early years age children

www.zerotothree.org/resources/3264-at-home-activity-guide

Free home learning booklets from EYFS through to GCSE

www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/extra-subjects-parents/school-closures-category-free-resources-parents/school-closures-free-resources-parents

Virtual museum tours

www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours

Science Museum Group - Videos, activities and facts on lots of different science topics for all key stages

Learning-resources.sciencemuseum.org.uk/

CoolMath4Kids - interactive games covering the four operations (+ - x ÷) and fractions

www.coolmath4kids.com

Oxford Owl - free e-books for ages 3-11, and range of how-to videos for maths. They also have a parents' page which explains how spelling and grammar are taught in schools. If you ever wondered what a 'fronted adverbial' was, here's your chance to find out!

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>

Be creative and have fun at home!



There are a variety of ways in which you can support your child's thinking skills. These activities all encourage

- Attending and spending time on an activity
- Sharing an activity with someone else
- Planning how to complete an activity
- Thinking about different ways they could complete a task

Cooking Together

Cooking is great as it also includes literacy and numeracy tasks, such as, reading recipes or counting and measuring ingredients. Involving children in cooking can be fun and full of joy as they are involved in producing a tangible product at the end. You can also ask the children to finish off the cookies, cake, etc. by decorating them, lots of time can be spent on this. Help them only as much as needed and ask open ended questions such as: What do you plan to do next? Why do you think that happens next? What would happen if you didn't follow the steps?

Imaginative Play

Build a den or a camp in home/outside. This activity can be useful for play but also to create a safe place for children and a place they know they can have some quiet time such as reading a book, playing with little people, teddies or puppets. You can ask them to contribute to set it up with you, make decorations, put up lights and a sign. Children will find this fun and different. It can create an imaginative world for the child.

Playing games together (or apart)

Board and card games provide a fun way to develop your child's thinking skills but also teaches them about social skills such as taking turns, winning and losing graciously, planning, decision making, general knowledge, counting, adding and subtracting. Activities such as puzzles and Lego tend to be calming as the brain focuses on putting things together rather than verbal or emotion demanding tasks. Offering these activities in the house will be of benefit to everyone as it will help all involved to be grounded and calm.

For more ideas:

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Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.
<https://theimaginationtree.com/>

Supporting your child's emotional wellbeing

Emotion coaching

Encouraging children to pay attention to their feelings and problem solving around more challenging feelings is very valuable at this time. Emotion coaching is a 3 step process, as illustrated below, which supports this.

Step 1- Empathise, validate and label

- Recognise all emotions as being **natural and normal** and not always a matter of choice
- Recognise behaviour as communication (relational vs behavioural model)
- Look for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt
- Take on the child's perspective (mentalising/mind-mindedness)
- Use words to reflect back child's emotion and help child/young person to label emotion
- Affirm and empathise, allowing to calm down
- Provide a narrative/translation for the emotional experience (creating cognitive links)



Emotion Coaching Scripts

Step 1: Examples

- *'I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry if that happened to me. It's normal to feel like that'*
- *'I can see you're frowning and you're kicking the wall and you're expressing a lot of energy. I would be feeling like that too if I didn't want to do something'*
- *'I noticed you looking around at the other who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling nervous right now about whether your work will be ok. Have I got that right?'*

Giving language to emotions is an important step to helping children identify them, express them and process them. You can also keep track of emotions via a "feeling chart" somewhere in the house; track different emotions for the whole family over the course of a day or week. Focus on the physical cues and ask question

Step 2 : Setting Limits (if needed)

- State the boundary limits of acceptable behaviour
- Make it clear certain behaviours cannot be accepted
- But retain the child's self-dignity (*crucial for responsive behaviour and well-being*)



Emotion Coaching Scripts

Step 2: Examples

- *'These are the rules that we have to follow. Doing that is not ok'*
- *'We can't behave like that even though you are feeling annoyed because it is not safe'*
- *'You didn't put the ball away as we agreed. You're probably angry that you can't play with Billy now because you have to stop now'*

Step 3: Problem solving with the child

- When the child is **calm** and in a relaxed, rational state:
- **Explore** the feelings that give rise to the behavior/problem/incident
- **Scaffold** alternative ideas and actions that could lead to more appropriate and productive outcomes
- **Empower** the child to believe s/he can overcome difficulties and manage feelings/behaviour

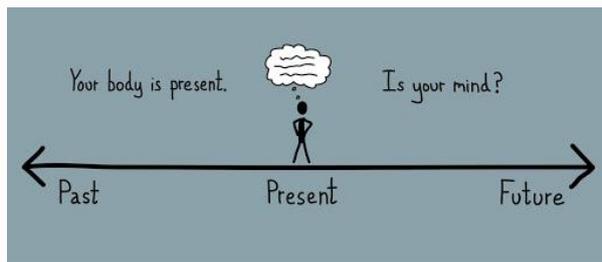


Emotion Coaching Scripts Step 3: Examples

- *'This is not a safe place to be angry. Let's go to a safe place and then we can talk'*
- *'Next time you're feeling like this, what could you do? How do you think you will react next time or if this happens again'*
- *'You need to sit either by Ruth or sit by your key adult in front of me – which do you want to do?'*

One strategy for Step 3 is to create a quiet zone – ask your child what they would like in there, provide some calming activities and consider all the senses including textures, smells and sound.

Mindfulness



Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present and only the present.

Paying attention to the present allows children, and adults, to shift away from worries and concerns that may have arisen in the past or they fear may arise in the future. The essence of mindfulness is to train our minds to focus on the now and avoid the clutter associated with worry and anxiety.

5 Mindfulness Activities

Super Senses

This practice really does bring children's focus back to the present and is a perfect introduction to the core element of mindfulness. Children can begin this practice lying down, seated or standing as the impetus is on concentrating on incoming signals. Once settled, have your child focus on what they can sense. What they can see, smell, hear, taste and touch. Without speaking, they should simply focus on these senses. You may wish to prompt them to move on to the next sense.

Superhero Pose

Our body language, via 'power posing', can reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol in our bodies.

To strike your superhero pose:

Place feet hip-width apart. Clench fists and either: placed on both hips; or one hand placed on a hip and the other pointing to the ceiling. Eyes closed once in position. Breathe slowly, and steadily. Hold for 2 minutes.

Mindfulness Jar

Fill a jar with water and add glitter glue (or a combination of glue and glitter). Shake the jar with the lid on. Then, holding the jar, ask your child to

"Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That's why it's so easy to make silly decisions when you're upset – because you're not thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us (yep, grownups too).

[Now put the jar down in front of them.]

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Now watch what happens when you're still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you're calm for a little while, your thoughts start to settle and you start to see things much clearer"

This practice illustrates effectively the chaos that can sometimes exist in the mind of a child.

Tummy Breathing Buddy

Mindful, especially deep abdominal, breathing can encourage calmness. This practice incorporates deep breathing with the presence of a 'buddy' that may bring further peace to children. Children should choose a stuffed animal or toy for their buddy. Once chosen, children should lie on their back with their buddy on their tummy. Breathing slowing, children should focus on the rise and fall of their buddy. The rhythmic movement encourages children to breathe slowly whilst focussing on their breath and their buddy.

Petal Breathing

A short and very simple practice that can be used at any time. Sitting, placing the backs of their hands on their legs, and touching thumb-to-thumb, little-finger-to-little-finger, children create a flower shape with their hands. Closing their eyes, children breathe in through their noses to 'smell' the flower. They then breathe out through their mouths to blow the petals off the flower, at the same time opening out their fingers. As this practice is so simple it can be practised whenever they are overwhelmed with negative thoughts and feelings.

A final word

With all the challenges facing parents at the moment, it's a common experience to feel overwhelmed.

We recommend keeping a balance; try out different things, but not all at once, and remember that if you are anxious and stressed as a carer, then your child is more likely to be too.

By taking one step at a time and one day at a time you will feel better able to overcome what can feel like huge challenges.

If you are a parent or carer and require any further advice or support from an educational psychologist relating to the above; please contact the following help line: **0161 276 0115 - Monday to Friday 09:00-12:00**

We hope this helps.