

## **Supporting parents manage their worries and anxiety**

We recognise how important it is to support parents to support their children and manage their worries and anxiety. This section focuses on different tools and strategies parents can use for themselves during this stressful time, but they can also use the skills outlined elsewhere in this document.

### Self-care is key

To address worries and anxieties, it is particularly important to consider engaging in activities that will make you feel calmer or more positive. This is especially true in times of increased stress and uncertainty: these should help relieve some of that anxiety and slowly improve your mood.

If you are looking after others, be that at work or at home (or both!), you might feel like you simply don't have time. When you feel that way, remember the air-mask analogy: when the cabin air pressure drops and the air-masks drop in the airplane, we are instructed to put ours on before helping others. This is because the lack of oxygen would make us incapable of fitting someone else's air-mask or subsequently putting our own air-mask on. Similarly, you need to help yourself before you help others. If not for you, do it for them.

### Self-care activity ideas:

Exercise:

- Put on the radio really loudly and have a little dance
- Walk briskly up the stairs
- Stretch or do yoga (look up "home workout" on YouTube and you will find a wealth of videos to follow along with)
- Go for a jog (somewhere quiet!)
- Do some vigorous cleaning

Be creative:

- Draw, paint or sculpt
- Write in a diary or start a blog!
- Sing or play a musical instrument
- Knit or sew
- Carry out a DIY project
- Wander around a museum virtually  
<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours> or Google “travel leisure museums virtual tours”

#### Soothing and calming:

- Take a bath or shower
- Stroke a pet or soft toy
- Have a warm drink
- Practice meditation, mindfulness or relaxation  
(<https://blog.calm.com/take-a-deep-breath> or Google “Calm blog difficult times” and click on the first link)

#### Constructive activities:

- Work through all those emails just sitting in your inbox
- Deep-clean the kitchen cupboards or your car or your bookshelves
- Meal-prepare your week’s meals (especially helpful if you’re cooking for a family!)
- Wash and store your winter clothes

#### Connect with others:

- Phone / video call a friend or family member
- Help an elderly or vulnerable neighbour
- Have a hug from someone special
- Call a helpline ( <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines> / or Google “nhs mental health helplines” and click on the first link)

#### Activities requiring concentration:

- Do a puzzle, crossword or sudoku
- Play solitaire, computer games or apps

- Watch a really good movie, series or play
- (The National Theatre is streaming a play live on YouTube every Thursday 7pm:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUDq1XzCY0NIOYVJvEMQjgw> or Google “National Theatre Youtube”)

#### Self-care:

- Paint your nails
- Put on a face mask (not the type that stops coronavirus, the type that makes you feel relaxed and like you’re at a spa - for example:  
<https://www.realsimple.com/beauty-fashion/skincare/skincare-face/diy-beauty-products>)
- Get really dressed up for no apparent reason
- Watch your favourite guilty pleasure TV show
- Decorate the living room and have a little party with those you live with
- Make a pillow fort with your children (or just by yourself)

#### Release:

- Clench an ice-cube
- Bite a piece of chilli or ginger
- Sprint for 30 seconds on the spot
- Snap a band on your wrist
- Punch a pillow or a punch-bag
- Listen to loud music, sing really loudly and jump up and down.

#### Normalising psychological responses

- It is important to allow for space for taking stock and acknowledge your own reactions, thoughts, and feelings to challenges as understandable and acceptable during this time
- Remember – this situation is unprecedented; it is okay to not be okay
- Experiencing symptoms of stress doesn’t mean you are not doing a good job (as a parent or when working from home), it means you’re human
- Give yourself permission to step back and ensure you take breaks and rest

- Take care of yourself and pace yourself

### Resources:

- More free resources and self-help workbooks for adults compiled by Sheeva Weil, Senior Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner at Haringey Let's Talk IAPT service here: <http://www.lets-talk-iapt.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Covid-19-Wellbeing-Pack-by-Haringey-IAPT.pdf>
- **Psychology Tools: A guide to living with worry and anxiety amidst global uncertainty by Dr Matthew Whalley and Dr Hardeep Kaur.** The guide explains what worry is, outlines different types of worry and what can trigger it, how it is experienced in the body, the ways we think, and how it affects our behaviour. It then explains what to do about worry through advice about helpful routine and developing skills and strategies through different exercises. [https://www.psychologytools.com/assets/covid-19/guide to living with worry and anxiety amidst global uncertainty en-us.pdf](https://www.psychologytools.com/assets/covid-19/guide%20to%20living%20with%20worry%20and%20anxiety%20amidst%20global%20uncertainty%20en-us.pdf)
- **Bristol based Parenting Course Menu by the Families in Focus Parenting Team:**  
[https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33031/Parenting+courses+in+Bristol\\_.pdf/3701a6a9-5855-6458-60e8-dfc8f01412b9](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33031/Parenting+courses+in+Bristol_.pdf/3701a6a9-5855-6458-60e8-dfc8f01412b9)
- **Beacon School Support. Back to School: 5 Tips for Parents:**  
<https://beaconschoolsupport.co.uk/newsletters/parents-how-to-help-your-child-return-to-school-successfully>
- **How to support your child in asking for help with Dr Mary Stanley-Duke**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZ5ZXyT4QbM>