



ELSA newsletter 6: Focus on what you CAN control

Uncertainty makes us all feel anxious. At the moment, there are so many things that we and our children cannot control - we can't control what will happen in the future, how long lockdown will last or when the government will decide that schools will re-open. Dwelling on these things will make your child feel even more anxious, so help them to think of the things they CAN control to help fight the spread of the virus, about their lifestyle in lockdown, and to make themselves feel good.



What can your child control about Coronavirus?

Children may well be scared about catching the virus themselves, or a loved one catching it. Remind them of the steps they can take to avoid catching and spreading it. By washing their hands regularly, trying not to touch their face, staying home apart from exercise with their household, and keeping 2m apart when they pass other people, they are minimising the risk to themselves and others. They are being Coronavirus superheroes just by sticking to lockdown!



Stay healthy

Another way children can feel in control is to understand that they can look after their bodies to stay as healthy as possible. Talk about how exercise, sleep, relaxing and a balanced diet all keep them fit and strong.

What can your child control about their day?

Can they decide which order they do their school work in or where they do it? What kind of exercise they do that day? Can you take turns choosing where you go for your walk, which board game you play or what you have for supper? Can they choose which friends they contact and how? Some of these things may not be in their control, but decide which ones are and let them know. (Be aware that some children may find choice overwhelming and would rather be given a structure to follow.)

How we view the situation

Try to encourage your children to look for the positives in lockdown. They can't control whether they can go out and see friends, but they can decide to spot things each day that they've been grateful for and to look for the good rather than the bad (see [Newsletter 4](#) for more on this). It's hard to change feelings, but if you can help your child spot negative thoughts, you can talk about these and help them challenge or change them. If your child **thinks** "I will catch coronavirus as soon as I go outside", they will **feel** scared. Discussing and challenging the **thought** will be more helpful than telling them not to **feel** scared.



Doing things they enjoy

Teach your child that they can have some control over making themselves feel better when things are tough. Help them make a list of things that make them feel good, or make a self-soothe box (watch my [video](#) to see what's in mine!) that they can go to when they are upset, or use pro-actively to stay calm through the day. Encourage them spot how they feel better after exercise or talking to a friend so they remember it for next time they have a tough day.

Controlling our reactions

We can't change other people's actions, but we can change our reactions to them. It will be frustrating and confusing for our children to see other people ignoring social distancing guidelines, when we have told them they can't go out to play with their friends. We cannot control what other people do (unless you want a confrontation!) However, we can choose whether our children see us react angrily and resentfully, or reinforce to them why you and your family are making the right choice. They can also learn from us that it's ok to calmly ask someone to stay 2m away if they come too close.



ELSA support poster on how you can help yourself and your child during lockdown:

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>

