

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS DURING LOCKDOWN

Lockdown has introduced a new set of challenges for families having to navigate government guidance around self-isolation and social contact.

Household routines have been disrupted during the pandemic. So, at a time when our children need stability and a calm environment, how can we strike the right balance?

This guidance, written in conjunction with academics and the Parents' Network, will provide advice and information on resources, including those available through the University and external sources.

If you have suggestions for additional resources that might be made available to parents, please email ohquery@essex.ac.uk

How can we reduce disruption and ease the pressures faced during this time?

- **Find common ground.** If appropriate, have a family discussion about the lockdown. Share concerns and agree how you can help one another to reduce stress in your household
- **Be truthful.** Try to answer questions your children have about the virus. Rumours and speculation can fuel anxiety, so try to source answers from credible sources. Consider limiting the time spent watching or listening to news programmes, if you feel this is causing anxiety for you or other members of your family
- **Provide a structure.** Children need structure and predictability, so negotiate a routine with them (including outside time and time off-screen). Don't worry if children aren't keeping up with schoolwork - view the enforced break as an opportunity for some child-led, individualised learning
- **Keep moving.** There are currently lots of exercise sessions available online and you can also be creative: creating an obstacle course in the garden is one example
- **Get things done.** Accomplishing activities that are long overdue will improve wellbeing for families. Include long-avoided chores, repairs or tasks. Families should also consider things they can do together
- **Give each other space.** As well as family activities it is also important to have time set aside for yourself, to do things you enjoy and to rest
- **Stay in touch.** Make time to contact friends and family whether via Zoom or social media

Most importantly, if you are worried about your wellbeing, or that of a member of your family, seek help.

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Having conversations about the virus

Resources are available:

1. Advice about talking to your children about the virus can be found from the **Charlie Waller Memorial Trust**
2. **Childline** have produced guidance on Coronavirus, including some easy-to-understand information for children.
3. There is also a free book available by Gruffalo illustrator Axel Scheffler **here**.
4. This video from Lingo Kids also **helps to explain the virus to children**
5. The National Association of School Psychologists have created guidance titled '**How to communicate with children about COVID19**'

Parent Support Services

1. **Essex Family Support Service** provides support to families, including school-aged children and young people aged 8 – 19 years.

The aim of this service is to support families to work towards

- Being emotionally healthy, happy and resilient
- Making behaviour choices that promote safety and wellbeing
- Becoming socially connected, resilient and resourceful families
- Developing healthy inter-parental/guardian and family relationships

Families are also able to self-refer by calling **01206 505 250** or emailing **families@community360.org.uk**

2. **Healthwatch Essex** are able to offer advice and signposting to health, social care and wellbeing services in Essex.
3. **Young Minds** is the UK's leading charity championing the well-being and mental health of children and young people. Their website contains a wealth of resources on the topic for children, young people, parents and anyone working with young people. There is also a helpline for parents looking for help and support.
4. **Action for Children** offer online **free, confidential support on any aspect of parenting**
5. **Home Start** have an excellent website to support you during this time including, with guidance on:
 - Creating a family routine for self-isolation
 - House activities that children can be involved in
 - Communicating with toddlers
 - Lists of activities and exercises to engage in with your kids
6. **Bounce Forward** are offering an Online Resilience Course for Parents to build vital skills to help their children be more resilient during this uncertain time. You can join the first session free – you will then have the option to

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purchase five more sessions for £10 - just £2 a session - a nominal fee to support the charity. Each live session will be recorded and sent to you after so you can watch on-demand.

7. **Relate** offer a free parent helpline and online family and relationship counselling.
8. **Teen Tips** are offering live online talks for parents & teens to help in this challenging time. Each hour-long talk can be accessed from your computer, tablet or phone at home. You will be able to ask questions, which they will endeavour to answer during the allotted time or take up separately with you if needed. These talks are offered at a much reduced price of £6 per person, per session. Couples and siblings can watch together – times and booking details are below.

Young People Support Services

1. There is an online Essex wide service called **Kooth** that young people (11 to 26) can access for counselling. Young people can access Kooth themselves, by setting up a confidential account
2. **Big White Wall** is an online mental health and wellbeing service for young people (16 to 18) offering self-help programmes, creative outlets and a community that cares.
3. **The Mix** is the UK's leading support service for young people (13 to 25). They are here to help you take on any challenge you're facing – from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. Talk to them via online, social or our free, confidential helpline.
4. **Emotional Well-being and Mental Health (EWMHS) service** is for young people up to the age of 18 living in Essex. There are seven teams that offer more intensive support across Essex and more information about these teams and where they are based can be found under local services on the **MindFresh site**.

Additional Guidance Available

1. The **Government** has released advice for how to support children's mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak.
2. There is also a **parent's guide** from 'The Parents Guide To' website giving advice if your child has anxiety around Coronavirus.
3. Two resources jointly developed between **Family Solutions** and the **Commissioning Team** provide general advice around how to cope with **potential increase of stress in the household** and **prioritising issues** that parents may be address with young people at this time.

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4. **UNICEF**, in a recent [article](#), interviewed expert adolescent psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour, to learn more about how families can support each other at this time.
5. The **National Child Traumatic Stress Network** have produced the guidance **'Parent guide to helping families cope with COVID-19'** covering the following topics:
 - Preparing your Family for a Potential Infectious Disease Outbreak
 - Reducing Your Family's Risk: Hygiene, Medical Care & Supplies
 - Coping with the Stress of an Infectious Disease Outbreak like COVID-19
 - Information & Communication
 - Scheduling & Activities
 - Self-Care & Coping
 - A list of possible reactions and how to respond by age category
6. **Childnet** provide advice on keeping children safe online depending on their age category

Activity Resources

Essex Library Service have a wide range of **free e-books, e-audio and magazines** available for free.

Change4Life and **Disney** have teamed up again to bring you new **Shake Up games** inspired by Disney and Pixar's Toy Story 4 and Incredibles 2, and Disney's The Lion King and Frozen.

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust are launching a free interactive [Wellbeing Challenge](#) commencing Monday 4th - Sunday 17th May. The idea is to encourage young people to think positively about their mental health; it's based around the 'Five Ways to Mental Wellbeing': give to others; connect; keep learning; take notice; and be active.

Colchester Borough Council offers a range of **activities** created by the museum and park and countryside teams for your children.

See below additional activities for your children to do at home:

- [Origami](#)
- [Chair-based pilates](#)
- [Sign Language](#)
- [Earn a Blue Peter Badge](#)
- [Craft Activities which you can filter by age](#)
- [CBeebies puzzles](#)
- [Forestry England](#)
- [An extensive list of activities include online courses, virtual tours and](#)

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- [live webcams](#)
- [Virtual field trips](#) -
- [Visit an Art Gallery or Museum by taking a virtual tour](#)
- [Take a FREE course with the Open University](#) (over 13 years only)
- [The National Theatre, London, broadcasting live full-length theatre productions, free to stream on YouTube](#)
- [Further free online plays, musicals and operas](#)
- [Additional outdoor activities provided by the Scouts](#)
- The Little Gym in Chiswick offer a set of amazing, free and fun, online classes for babies up to older primary school age children - they are grouped by age on their [YouTube channel](#)

Wellbeing Resources

1. The **How to Fail podcast** with Elizabeth Day is a podcast that celebrates the things that haven't gone right. Every week, a new interviewee explores what their failures taught them about how to succeed better. There has been a recent focus on the Covid-19 and philosopher Alain de Botton speaks about ways we can try and cope during the pandemic.
2. The **British Dyslexia Association** recorded a webinar with Professor Amanda Kirby for parents titled '**Managing you and your child's wellbeing – being realistic and human (not super-human!)**'. Although this is being led by the British Dyslexia Association it is actually for all parents of children of all ages. This session outcomes were to help parents better understand what anxiety is and provide practical tools to help you and your children manage and minimise anxiety in these uncertain times and improve happiness and wellbeing.
3. Rachel Munns has written a **Coronavirus Survival Guide** for working adults, which is available for free (along with many other wellbeing resources) via [**www.resilientme.co.uk**](http://www.resilientme.co.uk)