



Keeping your Children Safe Online

Dear Parent/ Carers,

During these school closures, you may find that you are using the internet more than usual. Safeguarding your children remains our main priority, therefore it is essential that we understand how to protect them from some of the dangers they may face when using the internet. Please ensure that if you are accessing any online support, that it is from a reputable organisation/individual that can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children. Below are some links to offer support to keep your children safe online:

- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

At St Aidan's, we are working with staff, pupils and parents/carers to create a school community which values the use of new technologies in enhancing learning, encourages responsible use of Computing, and follows agreed policies to minimise potential e-safety risks. Please note that although we are not in the school building, our safeguarding policy still applies to our remote education on google classroom. This includes adult access to the children, therefore it is essential that adults do not use google classroom or school360 to contact pupils or staff. Our safeguarding policy has been updated as required by the government to reflect the current COVID-19 crisis.

We appreciate parents can have a difficult job keeping up with their children on the fast changing technology available to them, let alone knowing the dangers they face. The issues of safety, privacy, online predators or grooming and cyberbullying are sometimes complex, both technically and psychologically and it can be a struggle to keep up.

To help you we have put together a selection of guides which will ensure that your children can reap the benefits of the Internet while staying safe.

We also have access to online safety guidance for websites and apps that may be beneficial, including: Houseparty, TikTok, Whats App, Minecraft, Fifa20, Fortnite, Snapchat, Instagram and many others.

If you would like any of these sent to you, please contact the school admin via email and we will endeavour to get them to you as soon as possible.

We have adapted the current school acceptable use policy for our remote learning provision during COVID-19 closures.



Acceptable use of the school's remote learning provision:

Agreement for pupils and parents/carers

Name of pupil:

When using the school's remote learning provision (google classroom and school360), I will not:

- Use them for a non-educational purpose
- Use them without a teacher being present, or without a teacher's permission
- Upload any inappropriate websites
- Allow others to access my class
- Allow others to comment on my class stream
- Open any attachments in emails, or follow any links in emails, without first checking with your parent/carer
- Use any inappropriate language when communicating online, including in emails
- Share my password with others or log in to the school's system using someone else's details
- Give my personal information (including my name, address or telephone number) to anyone without the permission of my teacher or parent/carer
- Upload pictures or videos of my face on the classroom stream (these can be accessed and downloaded by others).

When using the school's remote learning provision (google classroom and school360), I will:

- I agree that the school will monitor the content uploaded onto google classroom.
- Use the classroom to promote my learning.
- Immediately let a parent, carer or teacher know if I find any material which might upset, distress or harm me or others.
- Always use the school's google classroom and internet responsibly.
- Only upload pictures of activities and work I have completed at home.

Signed (pupil):

Date:

Parent/carer agreement:

- I agree that my child can use the school's remote learning provision and internet.
- I agree to the conditions set out above for pupils using the school's remote learning provision and will make sure my child understands these.
- I agree that I will supervise my child's activity, and contact the school if I feel I need support using the school's admin address admin@st-aidans.northumberland.sch.uk or ringing the school office on 01670 813308.

Signed (parent/carer):**Date:**

As this is unpredicted and unprecedeted times, we were unable to provide this to you before introducing google classroom. If you do not agree to this policy, please contact school and we will provide printed out activities for your child and remove your child from google classroom.



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Online Safety Tips For Children



Do's

1 KEEP YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION PRIVATE ONLINE

Only share it with people you know like friends and family. Ask a trusted adult, like your teacher or a family member, to help you change your privacy settings so that strangers can't see it.

2 SPEAK POLITELY AND BE KIND TO OTHERS WHEN YOU SPEAK TO THEM ONLINE

Treat them like you would treat them in real life and always remember your manners.

3 TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED ONLINE

If another person is sending you nasty messages, a trusted adult will be able to help you collect evidence and report the person to the relevant authorities.

4 USE PASSWORDS TO PROTECT YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Ask a trusted adult to help you create a password that you can easily remember but which is hard for other people to guess.

5 ALWAYS CHECK WITH A TRUSTED ADULT FIRST BEFORE USING A DEVICE OR DOWNLOADING A NEW APP

This is so that they can check it is safe for you to use and make sure the privacy settings are right.

6 TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IF YOU SEE SOMETHING ONLINE WHICH YOU DON'T LIKE

This can include anything that upsets you, makes you feel sad or which you're unsure about.

7 USE THE INTERNET TO HAVE FUN AND TO HELP YOU FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THINGS

Remember to ask your trusted adult for help and always use child friendly search engines so that the information you get back is safe.

Don'ts

1 ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS OR PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Always tell a trusted adult if somebody you don't know tries to contact you online.

2 SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON YOUR DEVICE

Instead, go out and play with your friends, get some fresh air and try to exercise more. This will help you stay fit and healthy.

3 REPLY TO MESSAGES FROM ONLINE BULLIES OR PEOPLE WHO SEND YOU NASTY MESSAGES

The most important thing to do is to tell a trusted adult and then block the person from contacting you.

4 COPY PEOPLE'S WORK ONLINE OR PRETEND IT IS YOURS

This is called plagiarism and can get you into a lot of trouble.

5 BE MEAN OR NASTY ONLINE

Behave online like you would in real life and don't post anything that can make you look like a bad person. Things that you post online can stay there for a very long time.

6 USE YOUR DEVICES CLOSE TO BEDTIME

This will allow your brain to rest so that you can get a good night's sleep, stay focused at school and perform better in class.

7 SHARE PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET WITH STRANGERS

Always tell a trusted adult if somebody you don't know asks you for your personal information.



10 TOP TIPS REMOTE LEARNING FOR CHILDREN

Remote learning can be a great way to continue learning outside the classroom, particularly in difficult circumstances. For students, it's the perfect way to ensure they still get the education they need, despite not being at school. However it also requires a level of discipline and careful planning. That's why we've created this guide to help pupils understand different aspects of remote learning and to support them in ensuring their experience is as safe and secure as it can be.

1) Treat remote learning the same as classroom learning

Despite being at home, it's important to remember the same rules apply as being in the classroom, particularly in respect of behavior and conduct. Focus on learning and don't get distracted by your surroundings.



2) Use classroom language

If you are encouraged to communicate through emails and online messages, don't use shorthand text speak and write as though you would speak in class. Remember to be respectful and polite and avoid posting negative comments or spamming the chat.

LOL!



3) Take regular screen breaks

Whilst remote learning might be an exciting experience to begin with, having prolonged periods of time in front of a screen isn't always healthy. Remember to have regular screen breaks where possible and in your spare time, try to get some fresh air and enjoy other activities away from electronic devices.



4) Always conduct video learning in an open space at home

To get the best experience from remote learning, it's important to create the right environment around you. Try to set up a mock 'classroom desk' at home in an open space so parents can supervise if necessary. Avoid bedrooms as this could be considered inappropriate.

5) Only communicate through approved school portals and platforms

It's important that you send messages and any pictures or images required for class through approved school channels, such as internal learning portals or approved platforms. This will help to keep your personal information safe and secure.



6) Stick to teacher rules and guidelines around online learning

Your school should issue you with guidance around remote learning and the rules to follow. Always maintain classroom behaviour and try to remember that you are in a learning environment and not a social setting.



7) Dress in school uniform

As part of your learning environment, try to maintain school uniform/dress. This will help as part of replicating classroom learning in the home. Try to avoid wearing anything too casual as this could be deemed inappropriate for school.



8) Don't share passwords or other sensitive information

In order begin your online lessons or to gain access to learning materials, you may be provided with login details and passwords. In the same way you keep your personal details private, always keep these safe and never share them with others.



9) Don't use school platforms to discuss personal matters

It's important to keep your school communication channels separate from your own personal communication with friends and family. Don't be tempted to engage in casual discussions or send images, videos or links via official school apps or platforms that aren't associated with your learning.



10) Look after your mental health and wellbeing

Remote learning ultimately means working alone and missing out on daily social interaction with your friends. If you ever feel frustrated, low or sad, it's important to discuss how you feel with your parents or your teacher. Keeping in touch with friends over the phone or on social media can also help to keep your spirits up.



10 TOP TIPS

REMOTE LEARNING FOR PARENTS

Remote learning can be a great way to continue learning outside the classroom, particularly in difficult circumstances. For parents and carers, the idea of remote learning isn't always straightforward and there can be a number of factors they need to consider, especially around ensuring their children feel comfortable and are familiar with the whole concept. That's why we've created this guide to help parents and carers support their child in getting the most out of their remote learning experience.

1) Take an active interest in your child's learning

As a parent or carer, remote learning will be a new concept for your child and there are bound to be a few teething problems to start with. Take an active interest in their learning and help support them whenever they need a helping hand.



2) Monitor your child's communication and online activity

It's important to remind your child that despite being at home, the same level of behaviour and conduct exists as if they were at school. Encourage them to remain polite, remember their manners and not to post or send any negative comments just because they are behind a computer.



3) Establish a daily schedule and routine

Working from home and trying to learn in a more casual setting that children might associate more with play and a degree of freedom might take a bit of getting used to. Try to stick to a daily routine and use the timetable/schedule that schools have sent home to help children keep on top of their daily learning.



4) Encourage screen breaks away from devices

Remote learning will inevitably require more interaction with computers, laptops and tablets. Teachers will invariably advise on screen breaks however it doesn't hurt to keep a check on their time online or encourage them to get some fresh air/exercise.



5) Ensure your learning device is in a public space in the home

It's important to consider where your PC or laptop is placed if live video is being used. Try to keep the background neutral with no personal information visible and move learning devices out of the bedroom as this could be deemed inappropriate.



6) Implement safety controls and privacy restrictions on apps and software

Dependant on how your school implements remote learning, your child may be required to download certain software or apps. Whilst these are likely to be relatively safe to use, like any other new app or platform, parents should still implement safety controls as a precaution.



7) Ensure your child only uses official school communication channels

It's important that all communication with teachers and school staff is directed through approved school channels, whether that be through the school's online portal or the relevant secure messaging site.



8) Familiarise yourself with relevant school policies

Schools should have a policy on remote learning and direction that they can share with parents. Familiarise yourself with this and ensure you know what is expected of teachers and your child during lessons, both online and offline.



9) Maintain feedback with teachers

Engage in communication with teachers where possible and try to feed back progress and development as well as any helpful suggestions around the learning process. Be transparent but remain professional and only use official channels to communicate.



10) Monitor your child's wellbeing and mental health

Remote learning will likely mean that your child won't get the same level of social interaction and might not see their friends for a while. Keep a check on their wellbeing and try to encourage them to get out as much as you can. Whilst learning from home might seem fun and exciting to start with, missing out on seeing their friends everyday might take its toll.





Always

Use wrung out alcohol wipes. Apple state that using a 70% isopropyl alcohol wipe or disinfectant wipe is ideal for the outside of a handset. To be on the extra safe side, power down the device before cleaning it. If you use a screen protector or protective case, you can clean these gently with warm water and soap. Just make sure you remove them from the phone first. While you CAN use general disinfectant spray, make sure it's sprayed onto a clean, soft cloth first, and not applied directly to the device. It will need to say something along the lines of 'kill 99.9% of bacteria' on it to be effective.

Turn the laptop all the way off before starting any kind of cleaning and always unplug it from the mains. If you can remove the battery of the device, do so. Wipe the screen with a dry microfibre cloth, then thoroughly wring out an alcohol wipe and repeat before returning with a dry cloth. The rest of the laptop can be cleaned with an alcohol wipe, much like a mobile phone, but be careful to wring it out to avoid unnecessary liquid dripping into the inner circuits. Be sure to clean thoroughly on and around the keys and any other buttons, but not between any open cracks.

Remove any batteries the controller might use (Xbox controllers sometimes have batteries in the back.) Use alcohol wipes and be sure to get into the crevices around the sides as well as all the buttons on a video game controller, then dry it immediately with a microfibre cloth. On a console, pay specific attention to things like the power buttons and disc/cartridge eject buttons if there are any. If you have a vacuum cleaner with an appropriate attachment, use this to remove things like dust or food prior to using an alcohol wipe. A microfibre cloth will also do the job but make sure it's clean and dry before you use it.

Use alcohol wipes like with laptops and keyboards. Make sure they're unplugged and leave them to dry a little after using disinfectant wipes. If you have a hoover with the right attachments, be sure to give it a once over first to remove food and debris. Compressed air is also great for keyboards. Use short, sharp bursts and aim to push dust towards somewhere you can hoover it easily. Lightly dampen a cotton swab with rubbing alcohol and be sure to get between the keys as much as possible. Things like mice, headphones and microphones also need to be disinfected with wipes. If your keyboard is wireless, remove the batteries before you clean it. Don't let any moisture leak inside the keyboard and dry them with a clean microfiber cloth.

How to clean DEVICES

Our electronic devices can be a breeding ground for germs and bacteria. Many viruses, including coronavirus, can stick around for several hours or even days after being touched by or otherwise coming into contact with an infected person. With that knowledge, keeping them clean can be as important as keeping ourselves protected in order to avoid becoming ill and maintaining a high level of hygiene and cleanliness. We have therefore created this guide to help you clean your devices effectively.



Never

Don't submerge the device in bleach or soapy water. Similarly, do not clean the device whilst it's charging or otherwise plugged into another device. Using alcohol wipes on things like leather cases or other fabric and material should also be avoided as it could damage them. Don't clean phone cases with in-built batteries or other electronics with soap and water. A big thing to remember is to not use straight rubbing alcohol. It can damage the oleophobic and hydrophobic coatings that keep oil and water from damaging the display and ports. Finally, don't use regular house-hold surface cleaners (non-disinfectant ones) on phones and tablets – they are too abrasive and may damage them irreversibly.



As with mobiles, avoid using water to clean the more delicate parts of your laptop such as keys and ports. While some of the more modern phones can be waterproof, laptops aren't and it will almost certainly cause damage and irrepair.



Do not use soapy water or bleach on the controllers and definitely not on the console itself. Make sure controllers are unplugged and inactive before cleaning them to avoid any problems with the electronics. Similarly, consoles should not be left on and need to be unplugged from the mains before being cleaned. Stay well away from the ports on consoles too, as any liquids could damage the interior.



Don't clean them with warm soapy water. The electronics in these are not designed to be waterproof like some modern mobile phones and tablets. Also, don't use too much rubbing alcohol on keyboards as they can remove the lettering on top of keys.



General Tips

1

Don't rub too hard. A gentle swabbing will be sufficient and excess cleaning could damage your devices. Wait a few minutes for the disinfectant to work, then wipe it clean.

2

How often you clean your electronics depends on a number of factors such as how much you come into contact with other people. Be sensible and practical.

3

Keep hands and faces as clean as possible. You'll have to wipe clean electronics less if you're nice and clean using them.

4

Remember, some germs are good and can help build a healthy immune system in children, but you can never be too careful with coronavirus.

5

Do not use regular kitchen sponges to clean devices - often they contain as many or more germs than our phones.

6

Consider using hands-free devices instead of pressing the phone to your face while making a phone call. If there's anything nasty on your phone, the last place you want it is near your face.

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



Sources:

- <https://www.consumerreports.org/smartphones/how-to-sanitize-your-smartphone/>
- <https://waterandhealth.org/disinfect/cleaning-disinfecting-electronic-devices/>
- <https://www.merrymaids.com/cleaning-tips/quick-tips/how-to-clean-and-disinfect-electronic-devices/>
- <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- <https://kotaku.com/how-to-clean-and-sanitize-your-gaming-gear-1842365692>
- <https://www.gamespot.com/articles/how-to-clean-your-phone-controllers-keyboards-and-1100-6474732/>

LITTLE REMINDERS OF HOW TO BE KIND ONLINE

ONLINE ABUSE CAN HAVE A SEVERE IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES AND IS OFTEN TARGETED AT THE MOST VULNERABLE. CYBERBULLYING HAS BEEN SHOWN TO HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT. IN ORDER FOR US TO DEVELOP EMPATHY FOR OTHERS WE SOMETIMES NEED TO MOVE AWAY FROM FULFILLING OUR OWN NEEDS AND THINK ABOUT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS. THIS IS SOMETIMES MORE CHALLENGING ONLINE BECAUSE WE CANNOT SEE THE PERSON, CONNECT WITH HOW THEY FEEL NOR INTERACT FACE TO FACE.

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU TO BE MORE CAREFUL ONLINE AND IS SUITABLE FOR ANY ENVIRONMENT I.E. GAMING, MESSAGING AND SOCIAL MEDIA. IT WILL HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING KINDNESS AND HOW TO DEVELOP EMPATHY ONLINE.

TOP TIPS FOR EVERYBODY

UNDERSTAND WHAT 'EMPATHY' IS

EMPATHY IS THE SKILL OF RECOGNISING, UNDERSTANDING AND CARING ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON'S FEELINGS AND TAKING ACTION TO HELP. THIS IS TRICKIER ONLINE BECAUSE RECOGNISING AND IMAGINING HOW ANOTHER PERSON FEELS IS HARD WHEN WE ARE NOT WITH THEM FACE TO FACE. WHEN WE TRY AND UNDERSTAND HOW SOMEONE FEELS THROUGH WORDS ALONE, IT CAN LEAD TO CONFUSION OR A MISUNDERSTANDING.

DEVELOP SELF EMPATHY

ALTHOUGH WE TEND TO SHOW THE BEST OF OUR LIVES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, THE REALITY IS WE ARE NOT ALL PERFECT. HAVING EMPATHY FOR OTHERS MEANS WE NEED TO ALSO HAVE SELF EMPATHY. IF WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE NOT ALL PERFECT, INCLUDING OURSELVES, WE CAN FIND KINDNESS.

TRY TO ADD VALUE

CONSIDER, BEFORE YOU COMMENT ON A POST OR IMAGE, HOW CAN I HELP THIS PERSON TO LOWER THEIR SADNESS? HOW CAN I ADD SOMETHING TO IMPROVE THEIR DISTRESS AND HAPPINESS? SHOWING OTHER PEOPLE'S PAIN AS ENTERTAINMENT AS A WAY TO GET NOTICED OR MORE LIKES DOES NOT ADD VALUE.

UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF YOUR WORDS

COMMENTING ONLINE SOMETIMES MEANS THAT WE DON'T ACTUALLY 'SEE' THE IMPACT OF OUR COMMENTS AND WORDS. THIS MEANS IT CAN BE EASIER TO DETACH FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR ACTIONS. UNKIND COMMENTS DO HAVE CONSEQUENCES AND CAN ADD TO SOMEONE'S DISTRESS AND FEELING ABOUT THEMSELVES.

ACTIONS



BE RESPONSIBLE

THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU ACT. CONSIDER, ARE YOU ACTING ON ANGER, FRUSTRATION OR IN A MOMENT OF JUDGING A SITUATION WITHOUT KNOWING THE TRUTH? ONLINE, IT IS EASY NOT TO HAVE ALL THE FACTS AND REACT TO A SITUATION WHICH IS BEING PORTRAYED.



DISASSOCIATE FROM PACK MENTALITY

ONLINE, IT IS EASY TO GET CAUGHT UP WITH POSTING NEGATIVE COMMENTS BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS TO BE. GET COMFORTABLE WITH STANDING OUT, AND NOT GETTING CAUGHT UP POSTING NEGATIVELY BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE IS. EVEN IF THIS MEANS STANDING ALONE AND REMINDING OTHER PEOPLE THAT THEIR BEHAVIOUR IS UNKIND. YOUR COURAGE COULD SAVE A LIFE.

#BEKIND



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MEET OUR EXPERT

THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN WRITTEN BY ANNA BATEMAN. ANNA IS PASSIONATE ABOUT PLACING PREVENTION AT THE HEART OF EVERY SCHOOL, INTEGRATING MENTAL WELLBEING WITHIN THE CURRICULUM, SCHOOL CULTURE AND SYSTEMS. SHE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, ADVISING THEM ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH GREEN PAPER.



For further info, check out these online resources too ↗

<https://www.themix.org.uk/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

HOW TO MAINTAIN GOOD MENTAL WELLBEING DURING ISOLATION

WELLBEING IS ABOUT BEING ABLE TO EXPERIENCE GOOD HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND HIGH LIFE SATISFACTION, INCLUDING MANAGING YOUR STRESS. IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO FIND THE RIGHT STRATEGIES TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN YOUR WELLBEING. OFTEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL METHODS ARE UNIQUE TO YOU AND ONES THAT CAN BE CONSISTENTLY APPLIED LIKE FOR INSTANCE, EVERY WEEK.

TOP TIPS FOR ALL

MINDSET & THOUGHTS

SOMETIMES, WE CAN ONLY SEE THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES. TRY TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS EVERY DAY TO REFLECT, PERHAPS THROUGH WRITING IN A JOURNAL OR SPENDING FIVE MINUTES IN THE MORNING TO NOTICE SOMETHING WE CAN BE THANKFUL FOR AND FEEL POSITIVE ABOUT.



POSITIVE THOUGHTS

WHEN YOUR THOUGHTS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY NEGATIVE, WE CAN FIND IT HARD TO FIND HEADSPACE TO THINK POSITIVELY. TRY THIS... IMAGINE YOU ARE SAT ON TOP OF A HILL AND YOU ARE LOOKING DOWN AT A TRAIN TRACK BELOW WHERE TRAINS ARE COMING AND GOING. NOW IMAGINE THE TRAINS ARE YOUR THOUGHTS. WATCH THEM COME AND GO. BUT DON'T GET ON THE TRAIN. JUST WATCH THE THOUGHTS COME AND GO IN YOUR MIND WITHOUT ACTUALLY FOLLOWING THE NEGATIVE ONES DOWN AN UNHELPFUL/NEGATIVE TRACK. JUST WATCH IT PASS!



EAT WELL

A 2014 STUDY FOUND HIGH LEVELS OF WELLBEING WERE REPORTED BY INDIVIDUALS WHO ATE MORE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES. THE KEY TO BALANCING EATING WELL WITH BUSY FAMILY LIFE IS TO PLAN AHEAD. IF YOU CAN PLAN WEEKDAY MEALS AND BUY THE INGREDIENTS AHEAD OF TIME THIS REDUCES THE NUMBER OF 'LAST MINUTE' UNHEALTHY MEALS.



DOING GOOD DOES YOU GOOD

THERE IS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELLBEING AND COMPASSION. DOING GOOD CAN HELP LOWER STRESS LEVELS AND IMPROVE YOUR WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH. HOWEVER, THIS CAN ALSO WORK THE OTHER WAY AND YOU SHOULD ALWAYS ENSURE THAT YOU ARE NOT HELPING OTHERS AT THE COST OF YOUR OWN WELLBEING.



KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

STUDIES SHOW THAT THERE IS APPROXIMATELY A 20-30% LOWER RISK OF DEPRESSION FOR ADULTS PARTICIPATING IN DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. TRY TO GO FOR A WALK DURING THE WEEK OR JOIN A CLASS OR LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP. MANY PEOPLE FIND THAT JUST THE CONNECTION WITH THE OUTDOORS HELPS TO 'RESET' THEIR MIND AND WELLBEING FOR THE DAY.



GOOD QUALITY SLEEP

IF YOUR MIND FEELS FULL UP OR YOUR EMOTIONS ARE OVERWHELMING, YOU WILL FIND IT HARD TO ENJOY A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP. THERE ARE LOTS OF FREE MEDITATION AND SOOTHING SOUND VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE (WAVES, RAIN, CALMING MUSIC). OR FIND A PODCAST WHICH IS FUNNY OR HUMOROUS. WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS DOWN ON A PAD OR CREATE A 'TO DO' LIST. THEN PUT THE PAD OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL THE MORNING. SLOWLY BREATHING FOR AT LEAST 3 MINUTES CAN ALSO HELP, IN MOUTH. SLOWLY THROUGH YOUR NOSE AND OUT SLOWLY THROUGH YOUR MOUTH.

zzzzz

ACCEPTING HELP

WE MUST BE ABLE TO LEAN ON OTHERS WHEN NECESSARY. IT IS UNREASONABLE FOR US TO ASSUME WE WILL NEVER NEED HELP THROUGHOUT OUR LIFE. THIS MEANS ACCEPTING HELP WHICH MAY BE VOLUNTEERED OR ASKING WHEN THE NEED ARISES. THE HELP COULD BE THROUGH A FRIEND, RELATIVE OR SERVICE YOU TRUST, INCLUDING NATIONAL HELPLINES.



STAYING CONNECTED

HIGHER RATES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, SUCH AS DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY, ARE ASSOCIATED WITH LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION. OFTEN SOCIALISING WITH OTHERS CAN FEEL LIKE A LOT OF EFFORT IN THE EVENING WHEN WE'RE TIRED. HOWEVER, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS TO OTHERS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON MAINTAINING GOOD WELLBEING. USING VIDEO CALLS, LIVE STREAMING OR 'FACE TIMING' IS A GREAT WAY TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY IF YOU'RE FEELING ISOLATED. IF YOU PREFER CALLING, PICK UP THE PHONE FOR A CHAT. MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS HELPS TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR CHILDREN, AS THEY NOTICE AND IMITATE THE BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS OF THOSE AROUND THEM.



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FOR FURTHER INFO, CHECK OUT THESE ONLINE RESOURCES:

- <https://www.nhs.uk>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>
- <https://www.livingwell.org.uk>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

10 Conversation Starters for Parents

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off raising the subject, not wanting to unearth problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the dark, this guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and end any stigma before it begins.



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1 LISTEN



This sounds obvious, but it is not something we are always great at. Active listening is where we listen without interrupting or making judgements and shows interest in what is being said. If your child feels listened to in the 'smallest of problems' they will become confident that you will listen when the 'biggest of problems' arise.

2 ASK TWICE



The campaign from time to change is great.
<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/support-ask-twice-campaign>. Be tenacious about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.

3 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION



This advice also relates to the first point. If your child can ask you any questions about the smallest of things and you listen and answer without shaming or belittling, then they will have more confidence to ask the biggest of questions.

4 BE OPEN AND HONEST



Children appreciate honesty, particularly if you are having to share information or talk about a difficult subject. For example, you may be talking about death or loss: 'It's very sad that Nana has died' or 'I feel sad that Nana has died'. How you talk about a subject will differ depending on their age and developmental maturity. Talking about death to a younger child for example will be different to that of an older teen, as their experience and understanding of death is different.

5 KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP



Assess the severity of the mental health difficulty you are noticing. Is the difficulty making it hard for your child to function regularly throughout everyday life? How frequently is your child affected, how long does it last and how persistent is it? Are they having problems controlling the difficulty? Talk to your child about your concerns and that it is likely they will need further support beyond family and friends.

6 TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH NATURALLY



Speak about mental health as part of everyday life, so that talking about our feelings and those of others is normalised. If the usual 'are you ok?' is not creating an opportunity for dialogue then say something like 'I know when something like that has happened to me I feel like this... is that how you are feeling or are you feeling something else?'

7 EMPATHISE



'It makes sense that you would feel this way, it is understandable'. Children often worry about things that we, as adults, might see as trivial or silly. However, for them at their age and stage it is a big concern and they need our kindness and care when they show their vulnerability and share their worries.

8 HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SAFE



Teens particularly feel that by talking about their worries or concerns that this will make things worse. Reassure your child that you will discuss a plan of action together and what may or may not need to happen next. If they are a younger child, it is likely you will need to lead the conversation and explain next steps.

9 MIND YOUR LANGUAGE



Be mindful of the language you use at home to describe and talk about mental health. Stigma often arises from misconceptions and a choice of language which is harmful. Using the word 'mental', 'man-up' or other such words in a derogatory way won't encourage your child to talk about their mental health for fear of being belittled.

10 IT IS OK TO SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT'



Adults do not have all the answers but often children think they do. It is ok to acknowledge that what your child is experiencing is not something you have come across before or know anything about, but that you will work it out together and seek help together.

Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.

Sources of Information and Support

Your GP

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/>
<https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

