**Making light of isolation**

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Asking anyone to not socialise and spend the majority of their time at home is challenging, even for the most mature and mentally strong. However, asking young people to do the same, particularly those with Special Educational Needs or learning difficulties can be even harder.

When they are upset or frustrated with the situation, the following are useful guides to start conversations with them. There is no template for a conversation with your child but it is a handy guide! We don’t know the full affect or consequence of Coronavirus, it could lead to issues further down the road so make sure you talk!

**How to comfort your child….**

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1. **Reframing the mind**

Sometimes we just need to see things from a different angle or perspective. We call this reframing, a form of therapy that gives a different way to look at a situation or person and give it a different meaning. Included in the student packs will be a reframing sheet for your child to have a look at.

Talk to your child about how the current situation gives time to learn about new things, particularly around the home. Look for positive, supportive statements such as ‘you have done so well up until this point’ and ‘look at what you have managed to do at home’.

Reframing is not about giving a false idea of what is happening but a more positive and less scary view of it. Tell them in a calm, non-dramatic way about ‘this little virus that will go away soon but we need to be really careful for now for it to disappear’. Tell them that the virus has meant less pollution as a result of people staying at home and not making needless journeys in their cars. It has allowed us to enjoy the little things in life such as a butterfly flying in the air when all we have is our garden or a park to keep us entertained.

It will also be an idea to reinforce occasionally that their restrictive actions are keeping their friends and family safe and this is a really **selfless heroic** thing to do.

1. **A calm you**

If we are consistently watching the news, particularly in front of our children and acting distressed or anxious, it will surely rub off. For your own mental wellbeing and that of your child, only watch the news once in the day and try avoid it at night.

Only tell your child things they need to know, such as how bacteria can be left on hands, surfaces and possessions such as mobile phones and keys. If your child gets ill, then it is a different matter and you must access all support mechanisms. Even then your child will appreciate a strong, calm and measured parent.

1. **Do something else**

A child may get upset about not going somewhere or meeting someone. The conversation could go like…. “ because of the virus you cannot go to school, nor be with your friends. It is necessary to take every precaution, like washing hands, and staying away from others, but don't worry, it will soon be over. You can always come to me if you have any questions, OK? Let's read, play, and do some nice things together because I love to be with you."

If they seem frustrated, take them into the garden or a quiet park and ask them to spot as many animals, birds, ducks, insects as they can. Take a picture of them and try and find out their names when you get home. Just sitting down asking them to draw something or asking them to put on their favourite music can work wonders.

1. **Plan in advance**

Think of activities such as a nature trail, bike ride or football game in advance and let them know the plans. “Tomorrow we will ride a bike and play penalties in the garden when we get back”. It gives them something to look forward to when boredom or frustration sets in.

Think of their favourite foods and ask them to join you in preparing them, rather than them watching TV or being glued to their phone while waiting for lunch or dinner. Making homemade mashed potatoes or guacamole is also another great idea, having your child mash an avocado or potato can be a good therapeutic release!

**Remember…**At the moment, the world around our children has suddenly changed. Streets are deserted, queues outside supermarkets, masks on faces and a worried look on someone’s face as they pass us by. Now is the time to spend more time with our children, positively engage with them, talk to and reassure them. If you find yourself struggling, do not hesitate to seek support.

We will probably never spend as much time with our children as we will now, cherish and make the most of it…even when you have a mountain of dishes to wash and laundry spilling out of your windows!!

