

FIVE WAYS TO HELP PUPILS WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

1. Draw a circle of control

Pupils might feel they have no control over much of what is happening, but if we look at things closely there are lots of things, we do have control over. To focus on these things, ask your child to create their own circle of control, where they draw what they can control on the inside and what they cannot on the outside. This then helps them to think of all the things they can control right now.

2. Don't hesitate to meditate

Meditation is a great way of clearing our minds of worries. You can find great meditations on [YouTube](#) or apps such as [Calm](#), talking you through how to relax your body and mind. You may want to do this before bedtime when you're chilling out before you go to sleep.

3. Look what I've been doing

With a stretch of time ahead, indoors at home is the risk of feeling bored. When a child has issues with mental health, they may find themselves getting into unhealthy routines, or dwelling on negative thoughts. Set the task of keeping a journal to write down things that they have been doing, sticking in photos and drawing pictures. The more they feel that they are achieving things with their time, the more positive they will feel about themselves, and the more resilient they will become. In their journal, your child can keep a set of tasks to challenge themselves each day. These tasks should be simple and achievable, for example: make bed, brush teeth, feed pets. Children should tick off every task every day. This kind of physical reminder of success will help them feel like their day has meaning.

4. I miss you so much

Children may have heard words such as 'self-isolation' and 'social distancing' but not really understood what they mean. It is important that parents/carers explain that these words mean staying inside our homes as much as possible, so we don't spread the virus or catch it from other people. Because of self-isolation and social distancing, children may not be seeing some of their family or friends for a while. Understandably this can lead to confusion and unhappiness. It's important that parents/carers emphasise to children that this is in order to stay safe – and it is not for forever!

An activity that can help children is writing letters to friends and family, and making plans for what can be done when we can leave the house again. It is also helpful to reminisce about happy memories when they did see their friends. Play the 'When we can go out I will...' game. Parent/carers could take turns in adding to a descriptive story of things they might do, and people they might go and see, once social distancing rules have been relaxed. Older children might want to write a description themselves.

5. And breathe

Sometimes when we worry, it can make our body feel different. For some people they find it hard to breathe. Encourage children to focus on taking deep breaths it can help them feel calm. There is an activity called 'my little teddy bear'. The child lays down and the adult places a teddy or soft toy on their tummy. As they breathe in and out, tell them to watch their teddy or toy move slowly up and down. By giving the child a focus, it encourages them to breathe more slowly and regularly and distracts them from their worries.

FIVE WAYS TO HELP PUPILS WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

We are all adjusting to finding a 'new normal' at this time.

Doing this in a **C*A*L*M** way will help everyone to get used to it more quickly and feel less worried.

C

Create new routines.

Routines help children feel safe.

It helps if you do things at set times in the day as it gives children something to look forward to.

Meal times and bed times are a really important part of everyone's routine, especially at times like this.

A

Ask a grown up

Encourage your children to talk to you about their worries. You could create a 'worry box' at home or plan in a 'worry ten minutes' into your routine so worries aren't taking over. Follow [@wellbeing_woody](#) for fun ideas and top tips to help look after your child's wellbeing.

L

Lovely Activities

The best way to keep worries in place is to fill your time with things you love! Use the alphabet to make a list of things you could do as a family. Cut them out and put them in a box so every day feels like a surprise.

M

Making the most of it

Coronavirus has given us all the chance to do the things we don't usually get round to do. Enjoy the time you can spend together as a family. Could you create a special journal or vlog to remember this unique time in history?