

Advice for parents: Talking to your children about life after lockdown



When we went into lockdown, lots of things changed. Everyone has had a different experience of being at home, both children and parents. Some of you may have found it difficult, missing the things you usually do or spending too much time together. Other people may have found this change quite nice, having less pressure, more time together and not having to tackle the parts of life we find more difficult. A lot of us may have fallen somewhere in between, with good days and more difficult days.

Whatever our experience we, and our children, might have mixed feelings about 'getting back to normal', especially as things may look a bit different for a while and things are likely to continue to change.

Below is some advice on the things that might help you and your children to cope.

How to talk to your children about the changes - Sometimes knowing what to say and what not to say is tricky however the following tips might help:

Talk about what's important to them.

There are lots of things that are likely to change, but not all those will change life for our children. Try to talk to them about the changes that will affect them and what that might look like. Remember some children will accept changes without a worry, others might even be excited!

Focus on helping your child feel safe but be truthful too. Don't offer more detail than your child is interested in. Answer the questions truthfully but if the topic doesn't come up, there's no need to raise it.

It's OK to say "I don't know". If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, say so. You can say that lots of things are changing and it makes it hard to 'promise' what will happen next. You can say you will tell them what you know and if anything changes.



Speak calmly and reassuringly. It's not just children who might find the idea of the changes to our world difficult. Adults might be worried or scared about doing things they wouldn't have thought twice about before. Children do pick up on how we are feeling, so if you are feeling wobbly or unsure try to take some time to make sense of the changes, and new information. Work through your own worries before you talk to the children about them.



Prepare & reassure - When lockdown is relaxed, we know that things won't get straight back to 'normal'. It's likely we will all need to follow new rules. There is also a whole new way of talking about how things have changed, with new phrases like 'social distancing' and 'PPE', which means Personal Protective Equipment. When out and about children are likely to see people wearing masks and gloves and they may have questions about this. They may have seen pictures of people in PPE on the news, which have seemed quite scary, so they may need extra reassurance that people wearing masks does not mean that they are poorly.



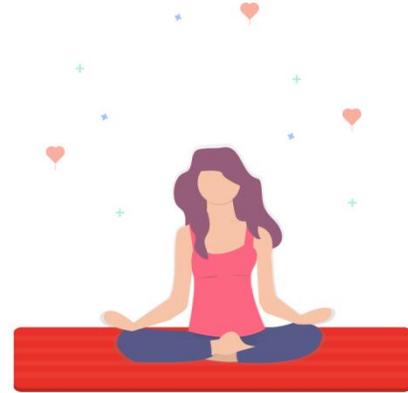
Talking to your child about wearing masks -

This could help prepare them. Try talking to them about different countries and cultures, like Japan, where people wear face masks whenever they leave the house. In these countries it is seen as being "polite" to wear a mask. If children need to wear masks you could practice wearing masks in the house, making your own with fun designs and perhaps even make one for their favorite toy.

It's OK to not be OK - Just like adults, children are likely to have mixed feelings about going back to normal. If your children are worried, avoid saying things like, 'don't worry' or 'there's nothing to worry about'. Having these feelings is normal for everyone. If your child has lots of worries, try writing them down together. Support them to think about how those worries make them feel and what can be done to help e.g. talking to a friend, having a hug, thinking of something which makes them feel good or doing some relaxing breathing.

Say it again! - Children don't remember information in the same way that adults do, so they might ask about the same things again and again. Try to be patient and explain again, or help them to think through what they might have been told before.

Practice ways of keeping calm - It is normal for worries and changes to make us feel a bit 'funny' or unsettled. It can help to stay calm and it's always helpful to learn different ways to help your body feel relaxed. There are lots of resources on relaxation and 'mindfulness' which is another way of helping our children to focus on what is happening in the here and now, rather than worrying about what might happen in the future.



Keep talking. - Tell children that you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more. You can say, "Even though we don't have all the answers to everything right now, once we know more, we will let you know, too."

Resources for younger children

[Advice talking to your child about scary world news](#)

[Cbeebies: ways to help children keep calm](#)

[Comic explaining anxious thoughts](#)

[YouTube Channel: Cosmic Children Yoga and Mindfulness for Children](#)

[NHS Sleep Tips for Children](#)

[List of mindful games, exercises and activities for children](#)

[How to make your own calming mood jar/bottle](#)

Resources for talking to older children

[World Health Organisation "Myth Busters" around Covid 19](#)

[Mood Cafe is a site that has relaxation resources, information about understanding anxiety and tools to manage unhelpful thoughts.](#)

[List of NHS approved apps for mental health support, relaxation and sleep](#)

[List of relaxation exercises to try](#)



[MindMate is for young people and their families to help you explore emotional wellbeing and mental health issues](#)

Helplines:

Childline - Telephone 0800 1111

The Mix - Aimed at people under 25. Telephone 0808 808 4994 from 4pm and 11pm everyday of the year. They also run a crisis text service, text THEMIX to 85258.

Crisis Text Line - Text SHOUT to 85258