

# Supporting your Child's Social & Emotional Wellbeing

Almost everything has changed: school, work, play. No-one really knows what the impact, if any, will be on children. What is known though, is that a caring, consistent and open parent or carer, who is coping as positively as they can, is likely important. The evidence shows that this relationship helps support children's resilience and wellbeing when they adapt to big changes, whatever they are.

However, being stuck at home together all day every day is not always easy. Here are some tips for handling the challenges and making the most of this time.

## Listen and Involve



Check in regularly with each child. Listen carefully: their concerns might be different to what you expect. Calmly problem solve together around any issues, such as different ways to stay connected to friends or ideas for a virtual birthday party. Working together supports wellbeing and models positive coping, creative problem-solving and shared decision-making. These are important resilience skills.

## Do Things Together...And Apart

Make sure there are times every day when you are each doing your own thing. Try the handy Octopus Tool. It can help kids learn to manage boredom positively and independently.

## Get Outside, Get Active

Exercise reduces stress and boosts mental health. Get active outside as much as the regulations will allow and, where possible, spend time in parks or nature.

## Make Memories

Create new routines to break up the week, such as pancake Wednesdays or virtual games nights or meals with grandparents. Celebrate mini-milestones, like the end of each week of home school.

## Be Present

Put down your phone, turn off the TV. Put thoughts of the crisis aside. To have quality time together, really be there.



Keep in mind: Home is not a safe place for all children or for some adult/s who care for them. Where this is the case, many of the suggestions above won't likely make it safer. Please seek support from organisations set up to assist families where safety is a concern due to being at home together for this long period of time.

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Beyond

Evidence-based tips to help support your child's mental wellbeing

# Managing Big Feelings

Worried? Upset? Bored? Frustrated? It's normal. Feelings like these are important. They let us know when something doesn't feel right and can help remind us to do important things, like wash our hands or call Grandma to cheer her up. Sometimes though, feelings take over our behaviour. Other times, we can get stuck in our thoughts and feelings and it stops us having fun or making the best of the situation. This handy Octopus Tool provides some steps for managing feelings in a positive way. It can be helpful for parents, carers and kids stuck at home. And, for learning emotional literacy as part of 'home school'.

1. Draw an octopus shape and choose an emotion that's bothering you.
2. Think of 8 things you like to do and that you can do by yourself. The more unusual and creative the better! Draw or write them on the tentacles.
3. Stick your octopus somewhere you can find it easily.

★ Top Tip: Make sure you lay out the resources so children can find these themselves when they need to. ★

4. Now the tricky part...notice when you are feeling the emotion. Don't try to stop or ignore it, just spot it. Then choose one or more of the activities from your octopus instead.

★ Top Tip: It's not always easy to know how you feel, but often your body or behaviour is showing you. For example, if you are whining, feeling grumpy, looking for a snack or bugging others you might be feeling bored. That's a good time to look for your octopus.

5. Make a new octopus as often as you want. Try different designs if you prefer - spider, jellyfish, flower, stack of cards...

## Keep talking and listening

Check in regularly with how each other is feeling about the situation. If you are concerned that you really aren't coping it is important to seek professional advice (many services are available on-line or by phone).

