



SAFEGUARDING

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ISSUE 1

Welcome to our Parent Safeguarding Newsletter Issue 1

The coronavirus pandemic and potential subsequent lockdown is an unprecedented situation in modern times. It is hard to gauge the full impact that the situation is having on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Children and young people's experiences of the lockdown period will have been very varied.

This newsletter aims to give a guide about how to support your child in the return, and first few weeks of retuning to school.

Your child might have worries about returning and maintaining a school routine. You can explore these and together help think of ways to manage them.

You might find the following resource of help <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/MHF-Scotland-Parents-Pack.pdf>.

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SLEEP ROUTINE

HELP YOUR CHILD RETURN TO THEIR NORMAL SLEEP ROUTINE.

Good sleep doesn't just mean lots of sleep: it means the right kind of sleep.

Sleep affects our ability to use language, sustain attention, understand what we are reading, and summarise what we are hearing; if we compromise on our sleep, we compromise on our performance, our mood, and our interpersonal relationships.

Sleep has also been shown to protect the immune system. The amount that each person needs is different; however, it is recommended that a healthy amount, on average, is between seven and nine hours a night.



MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Children may want to come and talk things through, but maybe not when you expect. Create space for talking in different ways, such as going on a walk together or baking together - there may be less pressure in these circumstances than when sitting face-to-face.

TALK ABOUT SCHOOL SPECIFICALLY

Start to talk through the daily routine that they were once so familiar with and how School is now. What are the differences? How do they feel about being back in School?

LOOK AT THE POSITIVES

It might be helpful to talk about things your child is looking forward to, like their favourite shop reopening, seeing friends in the park or getting ice cream from their favourite café.

COPING STRATEGIES

Model coping strategies you use when feeling stressed such as reconnecting with friends, doing regular exercise or using breathing techniques. If it applies, you could share your own worries and feelings about returning to work and ways you are managing these feelings.

WHAT ARE THE MENTAL CHALLENGES, AND WHAT CAN WE DO?

We should be prepared for the fact that the end of lockdown might be as hard for children as the start was.

Just as it took everyone time to find ways of coping during lockdown, we should also expect that it will take time to find our way back, and to reconnect with life.

Supporting children to find routines, stay connected, eat well, and exercise apply just as much now as they did at the start of lockdown - arguably even more so as we remain in a period of high stress but with more demands, or returning to the new normal.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

Fear and anxiety are possibly the most common emotional responses a child or young person will feel as we start a new academic year.

Many of us fear becoming ill with the virus or passing infection on to loved ones, as the risk increases when people interact. This is an entirely normal response, but risk can be reduced by following the guidelines.

Every time we go back to something it is going to feel unusual or even scary. We might feel nervous or anxious. That may be because students haven't done it in a while, and we have all forgotten how it feels, even teachers. It might be because things have changed due to the pandemic and routines have changed - like the one-way systems and maintaining social distancing.

It's important to help students to acknowledge that these feelings are reasonable, and to expect them. It's only by building up tolerance gently that we can move through these fears.

Encourage your child to take things at their own pace. Help them to try and challenge themselves to do something different each day or every couple of days.

It's very easy to allow the seclusion that was necessary in lockdown to become deliberate isolation as lockdown ends. Celebrate small achievements (and definitely big ones) and keep a record of what of what they are achieving.



Play some
relaxing music



Phone a
loved one



Write it out

THERE MAY BE A FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY

The sudden and unprecedented changes that the lockdown imposed on everyone are likely to have left many children and young people feeling uncertain. As regulations have been relaxed gradually, students may have felt unclear about what they were allowed to do, and with whom.

Some young people will feel concerned about the possibility of a second lockdown, others may worry that things which used to feel safe and predictable, such as school, may no longer be something they can rely on.

Many families will be navigating a lot of different systems and guidelines as they return to school and work. The impact of further outbreaks on parents' income and students' attendance at school may be a source of worry for some children.

THERE MAY BE A FEELING OF LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

Some children and young people will have relatives or friends who have died during the lockdown, due to coronavirus or other illnesses. Still more will have been aware of a relative or friend being seriously unwell or hospitalised. For other young people, there will have been other types of loss - for example, parents who have been furloughed or lost their job, a home and/or school move, or they may have experienced long-term isolation from important figures in their life such as grandparents.

Regardless of the type of loss, many will be experiencing this with a sense of grief. The way that children and young people respond to those feelings of loss and grief will differ widely - some may seem sad or withdrawn, others may appear anxious or angry.

Some useful support on bereavement, loss and grief are listed below from:

Young Minds have a piece which addresses loss and grief.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-and-loss/>

Cruse Bereavement Care also has information and advice for parents and carers.

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents>

PLEASE SEEK SUPPORT IF YOU NEED IT

Transitioning back to school after being in lockdown is no easy task. You may find that your child struggles to get back into school or experiences difficulties while they're at school. If this is the case, reach out to your child's school as soon as you can so that you can make them aware of the challenges and work together to support your child. If you are concerned about your child's mental health and you think they need professional support, speak to the school and your GP about the best next step.