

## Wellbeing Newsletter April 2020



As a school community, we are aware that maintaining our wellbeing in these uncertain times can be difficult.

### Take Care of Yourself

It's really important right now to take care of your own physical and mental health. Engaging in positive behaviours such as getting good night's sleep, eating a balanced diet and exercising will help. Here are some other things you can do to stay healthy:

**Connect with others** – maintain relationships with people you care about through phone and video calls

**Turn off the news** – it's important to keep up to date, but the 24-hour news cycle can make you more anxious. Limit your exposure to the news to only a small amount of time, just enough to know what the latest government guidance is

**Do things you enjoy** – now that we're all spending more time at home, we can finally take up that hobby we've always meant to learn. Try baking or gardening or learning to knit. These are also great activities we can share with our children

**Set goals** – it's easy to lose track of the days in our current situation, so it can be helpful to set daily and weekly goals to give us a sense of control and purpose. Examples might be setting a goal of walking for half an hour at least 3 times this week or reading a new book. These might be goals for your family such as getting the garden tidy, teaching a family member a new skill, being active together every day or sharing one thing you are grateful for each day.

**Connect with the outdoors** – depending on where you live, it may not be possible to spend time outside. If you don't have a garden, you can still open a window to let some fresh air and sunlight in. Put a comfortable chair by the window so you can look outside and get some air as you read a book

**Focus on what you can control and manage** - It might be hard for us to control our thoughts and emotions when we hear the upsetting developments of the outbreak but we can control how we respond. Go for a bath, give your pet a cuddle, read some positive books, play with your children, do some gardening.... try to focus on the present moments, here and now. We can control these little things and all little things contribute to the health of our body and mind.

**Talk to someone** – during this difficult time, sharing with family and friends how you're feeling and what you're doing to cope can be helpful for both you and them.

## How to talk to your child about what's happening

No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about what's happening. The Department of Education & Skills suggest letting your child's age and questions guide you as to how much information to give them.

Children pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing. You might find some of the following advice helpful but ultimately as a parent, you know your child best.

### Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts

- Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:
  - Advice from the Department of Education on how to talk to children: <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/talking-to-children-and-young-people-about-covid-19-coronavirus-advice-for-parents-and-schools.pdf>
  - [#covibook](#) – a short book to support and reassure children under the age of 7
- Explain how some stories they hear from friends or read online may be based on rumours or inaccurate information
- Limit their exposure to watching or listening to the news as children may find the information distressing.

### Encourage questions & discuss what is being done in the family and community

- This will give them the confidence to reach out, if they have anything to ask
- Be reassuring but honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers
- Be ready to answer the same question over and over – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance

### Listen to and acknowledge any worries or concerns they may have

- Recognise and manage your own worries first. Be open about your own feelings and let them know it's normal to be concerned.
- Validate their worries e.g. "That must feel scary" Normalise them e.g. "I felt scared like that when..." Help them process their worries e.g. "Even though we might feel worried, these are all the reasons why we are actually very safe..."
- By supporting children, listening to and acknowledging their fears, we teach them how to process their worries and help them by being understanding and supportive.

### Explain how our body's immune system protects us

- It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process
- Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before
- Remind them how important it is that they eat healthy food, sleep and exercise, as this helps to fight germs

### Some practical ways to help support your child's wellbeing during this time:

- Regular exercise and stretching / mindfulness or meditation
- Engaging in reading, games or some educational activities
- Participate in structured household chores
- Set gentle but firm limits
- Encourage expression through play and conversation
- Practice normal bedtime and sleep routine
- Maintain your children's friendships virtually – FaceTime, WhatsApp (under adult supervision) or letter writing

### Some useful free resources to support wellbeing:

- **Calm app** have some new free mindfulness & meditation resources for adults and children: <https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath?fbclid=IwAR31tnAtOxhlaHcXp4c0zFfemzQJaliD9AW7yLuRfOlhS2isSYE1wqbThBw>
- Free online **yoga** classes: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZkdZKOcvYTh4dRDXQ71m7gQUmWkDmLAI>
- **Yoga for children:** Cosmic Kids Yoga (youtube)
- **Pe with Joe Wicks:** a live workout everyday for adults & children: <https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html>
- Free **Pilates:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/pilates-for-beginners/?tabname=pilates-and-yoga>
- GoNoodle: A selection of dance/exercise & mindfulness activities for children: <https://www.gonoodle.com/families/>
- Some more tips from the HSE for minding your mental health: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

We look forward to seeing everyone back at school. Until then, mind yourselves and each other and remember that you're doing the best you can.

