

Clinical Psychology in Schools

# ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING?

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Learn more about how to help your  
child and where to find support



During the lockdown you may have found yourself worrying about your child or teenager's physical and mental wellbeing. Now you might worry about what returning to school will be like for them. It is common to want to help your child but not feel sure which approach is best. So, here are some tips that might help you support your child or teenager through this challenging times.

## 1. LET'S START WITH A BRIEF CHECKLIST!



**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR A CHILD'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH TO HAVE A DAILY ROUTINE, IT SHOULD INCLUDE ALL OF THE ITEMS IN OUR CHECKLIST, HERE IS WHY:**

# SLEEPING WELL



Quality sleep is essential for children's growth and development. A decent night's sleep will help them to do better at school, allow them to react more quickly to situations, have a more developed memory, feel less irritable and better behaved! Our sleep patterns are dictated by light and hormones. When light dims in the evening, we produce a chemical called melatonin, which tells us it's time to sleep. The problem is that modern life has disrupted this pattern. Bright room lighting, TVs, and other electronic devices emit enough light to stop our bodies producing melatonin.

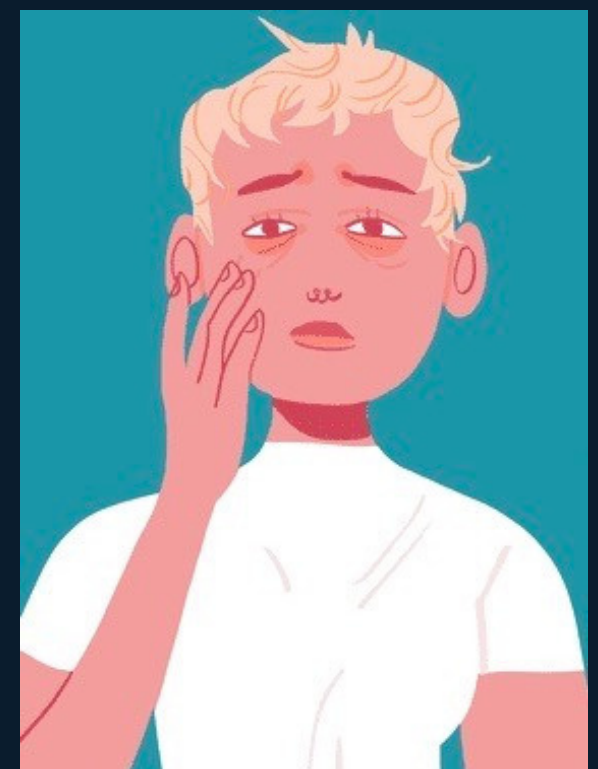
*Did you know?*

THERE ARE RECOMMENDED AMOUNTS OF SLEEP REQUIRED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

4 years	night-time: 11 hours 30 minutes	9 years	night-time: 10 hours
5 years	night-time: 11 hours	10 years	night-time: 9 hours 45 minutes
6 years	night-time: 10 hours 45 minutes	11 years	night-time: 9 hours 30 minutes
7 years	night-time: 10 hours 30 minutes	12 -13 years	night-time: 9 hours 15 minutes
8 years	night-time: 10 hours 15 minutes	14 -16 years	night-time: 9 hours

## Sleep deprivation causes:

- Child to become moody and grumpy
- Lack of focus and not working at their best
- Increased hyperactivity and other behavioural problems
- Disrupts a child's physical and mental development
- Affects on overall health and make them prone to serious medical conditions



## Having trouble to sleep?

- Try **the sleep strategies for kids** from the Sleep Foundation: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/sleep-strategies-kids>
- OR
- The **healthy sleep tips for children** from the NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/?tabname=sleep-tips>
- There are also some useful apps you can try - see the last page

The advice on this page is from the NHS and the Sleep Council. Recommendation by Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic.

## BALANCED DIET



Encouraging children to eat a nutritious, balanced diet early on is important for a number of reasons. Ensuring they get the right vitamins and minerals in their diet will help them grow and develop optimally. They are also more likely to be energised and motivated, supporting their ability to learn. Educating them on healthy eating during childhood will also help them make healthier choices as they become adults.

### *Remember!*

- Eat variety and more than 5 fruit and vegetables a day.
- Base meals on higher fiber starchy foods.
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives.
- Include some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, non-processed meat and other protein.
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads, and eat them in small amounts.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water a day.
- Avoid energy drinks and caffeinated drinks for children and everyone should keep sugary drinks such as juices, and fizzy drinks to a minimum.
- If your children like drinking tea or coffee, replace with de-caffeinated alternatives.
- Reduce high in fat, salt and sugar foods.
- Try to eat your meals at regular times and try to finish eating a couple of hours before you go to bed.

### **CHECK OUT SOME TIPS FOR PARENTS OF FUSSY EATERS AT:**

- <https://www.nutritionist-resource.org.uk/content/healthy-eating-for-kids.htm>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/fussy-eaters/>

### **HERE IS A GOOD TIP TO CREATE A FAMILY MEAL PLAN:**

- <https://realfood.tesco.com/meal-planner/create-meal-plan.html>

The healthy eating advice on this page from the NHS and the British Nutrition Foundation is for the general population (it does not apply to children under the age of 5 nor people with special dietary needs or a medical condition, as these people have different nutritional needs).

## EXERCISING REGULARLY



Aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a day across the week. Moderate intensity activities will raise their heart rate, and make them breathe faster and feel warmer. One way to tell if they're working at a moderate intensity level is if you can still talk, but not sing. Take part in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscles and bones. Reduce the time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity. Reduce the screen time and aim to spread activity throughout the day.

### *Regular activity helps to:*

- Feel good about yourself
- Concentrate better
- Sleep better
- Have a positive outlook on life
- Keep a healthy weight
- Build healthy bones muscles and joints

# **FUN** Facts!

### *Having problems getting your child to exercise?*

#### **Make it fun - Here are some suggestions:**

- Walking the dog
- Playground activities
- Riding a scooter
- Skateboarding and rollerblading
- Cycling on level ground or ground with few hills

#### **Limit screen time!**

One of the reasons children avoid exercise is because they are entertained watching TV, playing video or computer games. This often leads to a sedentary lifestyle. Limiting screen time will encourage them to look for other activities such as exercising, playing, creating and even socialising.

#### **THERE ARE FURTHER SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AT:**

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/>

## 2. HOW DOES ANXIETY FEEL FOR CHILDREN?

It's normal for children to feel worried or anxious from time to time, especially during big life events such as when they're starting school or nursery, or moving to a new area. Times such as the one we are living now also generates fear and insecurity for children. However, for some children, anxiety affects their behaviour and thoughts every day, interfering with their school, home and social life. When young children feel anxious, they cannot always understand or express what they are feeling but you may notice them.

### Symptoms of anxiety in children

#### THERE ARE THE SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN YOUR CHILD:

- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Have difficulty sleeping, or waking in the night with bad dreams, or start wetting the bed
- Not eating properly
- Quickly getting angry or irritable, and being out of control during outbursts
- Constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- Feeling tense and fidgety, or using the toilet often
- Always crying
- Become irritable, tearful or clingy
- Complaining of tummy aches and feeling unwell

#### In **older children** you may notice that they:

- Lack confidence to try new things or seem unable to face simple, everyday challenges
- Find it hard to concentrate
- Have problems with sleeping or eating
- Have angry outbursts
- Have a lot of negative thoughts, or keep thinking that bad things are going to happen
- Start avoiding everyday activities, such as seeing friends, going out in public or going to school
- Low mood, seeming withdraw and lack of enjoyment

*"Ups and Downs" are normal for teenagers as they are experiencing lots of physical and psychological changes but be aware if it is lasting longer than usual*

#### MORE INFORMATION AT:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/>

# 3. HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

It is really important that you look after yourself as well. As parents it is very easy to get overworked and exhausted. Recent study showed that mothers work an average of 98 hours per week. YES, that's right! **Parenting is hard work, well done parents!**

Therefore, it is essential for parents to care for themselves as well, not just for their own well-being but also for the benefit of their child. When parents have good self-care habits they will have more patience and energy to take care of their families.

## GOOD TIPS ON SELF-CARE FOR PARENTS:

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/joyful-parenting/201708/25-simple-self-care-tools-parents>

## THINGS THAT CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- Talk to your child about anxiety, what is happening in their body and why it happens. Many children and young people don't know what they are feeling when they are anxious, and it can be very frightening and overwhelming. They might even think they are very ill or that they are having a heart attack.
- Help them to recognise anxious feelings so they can tell when they are becoming anxious and can ask for help.
- Tell your child it will be okay, and the anxiety will pass. It can be helpful to describe the anxiety as a wave to ride or surf that gets smaller after it peaks.
- Get your child to breathe deeply and slowly, in through their nose for three counts and out through their mouth for three counts.
- Distract them by focusing on something else.
- Give them a cuddle or hold their hand if they will let you - touch can be soothing.

- It can help to talk to your child about finding a safe place in their mind - somewhere that they feel relaxed and happy. It may be a grandparent's or friend's house or a holiday beside the sea which they can picture when 'wrong thoughts' come into their head or they are feeling anxious. Sometimes holding a memento, like a seashell or pebble, can help.
- If your child is feeling the need to check things or repeat certain actions, suggest they count up to 10 before they start checking as a delaying tactic. This website has some good ideas.
- Encourage your child to notice what makes them anxious. Talking it through can help but your child could also try keeping a diary or a 'worry book'.
- Make a 'worry box'. Your child can write each worry down and post it in the box out of sight. Small children will enjoy decorating the box too. They can leave the worries in there for, say, a week to see if they were worth worrying about (if not they can be torn up). Alternatively, you could designate a specific 'worry time' for around 10 or 20 minutes, (but not too close to bedtime, or when the child is in bed), so worries can be saved up for that time. This gives the message that we are in control of their worries and not vice versa.
- Work on problem-solving. Name their worst case scenarios and think through together how to sort out the situation if it happens, e.g. 'I'm worried that we'll miss the bus.' 'What do you think we could do if that happens?' 'We could get the next bus'.
- Help them maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise to reduce the levels of stress hormones, good sleeping habits, calm bedtime routines, limited screen or computer time in the evening, and a healthy diet.

## MORE INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC FROM IS AVAILABLE AT:

- **Young Minds:**  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-anxiety/>
- **Talking to your child – NHS advice:**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/talking-to-children-about-feelings/>
- **Talking to your teenager – NHS advice:**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/talking-to-your-teenager/>



## 4. NEED HELP?

### SELF-HELP APPS SUITABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:



#### **STOP, BREATH & THINK: KIDS**

Meditation and mindfulness made easy and fun for kids. This app helps children to discover and develop their 'superpowers' of sleep, being calm, learning to breathe and to resolve conflicts. Designed for kids aged 5-10. (4+)



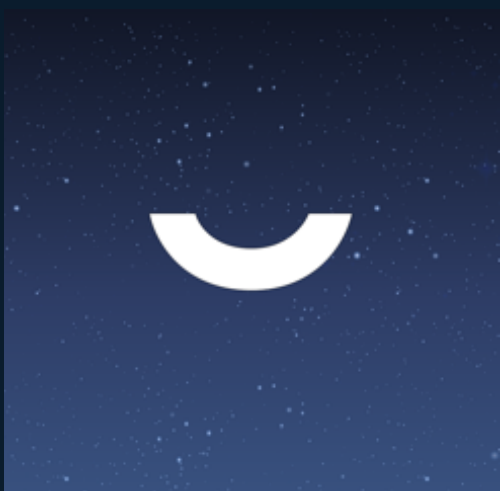
#### **SMILING MIND**

Smiling Mind make mindfulness meditation accessible to all. The programs are designed to assist people in dealing with the pressure, stress and challenges of daily life. It's for children, young people and adults at work and in the classroom. (4+)



#### **SELF-HELP FOR ANXIETY MANAGEMENT (SAM)**

SAM offers a range of self-help methods for people who are serious about learning to manage their anxiety. The content of SAM is presented in various media formats in order to support users in learning about anxiety and practicing self-help. (12+)



#### **PZIZZ – SLEEP, NAP, FOCUS**

This app plays you "dreamscapes"— a sleep-optimized mix of music, voiceover, and sound effects that changes each night, to quickly quiet your mind, put you to sleep, keep you asleep, and then wake you up feeling refreshed. (4+)

### USEFUL ONLINE GUIDES:

- [Youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)  
Young Minds provides information about mental health
- [Childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk) / **0800 1111**  
Childline provide confidential help and advice about a wide range of issues. Young people can talk to a counsellor online or over the phone, as well as post on message boards.

### EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY?

- Contact CAMHS 24/7 helpline on 0300 1234 244
- Contact your GP and arrange an appointment for your child