



# **Inclusion and Improvement Hub**

## **Coronavirus: Supporting Mental Wellbeing**



## Supporting Mental Wellbeing during Coronavirus

Note to Teachers and Parents:

We are already aware of the potential anxiety that is surrounding this unprecedented time as we shape our response to Coronavirus. Understandably, we all have lots of questions, there are lots of unknowns and genuine reasons to be concerned. As adults, we have a duty to hold this anxiety for our children as best we can. The Inclusion Hub have put together this pack to support mental wellbeing at home.

The pack begins by exploring how we can connect and support ourselves as adults so that then we can feel better equipped to support our children. Some parents may be feeling anxious about having children at home for sustained period of time so there are also lots of ideas for activities parents can do.

Each activity is underpinned by our Inclusion Hub principles of:

- **Connection** – connection with our self, family, friends and those who strengthen us.
- **Creativity and play**
- **Being Outdoors in Nature**
- And at the centre, nurturing the **Unique and Special YOU**.



Obviously, whilst families are in a period of self-isolation it may not be possible to get outdoors and we are mindful to follow the current government guidance on this. Hopefully however, there will be opportunity to get outdoors and access nature so we have lots of suggestions of what to do.

Remember - our children will learn lots from how we stay centred and manage our own anxiety so we must firstly take time to look after ourselves. Having fun together is so easily missed but it is so incredibly important!

Remember too that carrying out chores and household tasks not only helps get essential jobs done, it also gives children a sense of responsibility and belonging. Having fun and building strong relationships will provide the groundwork for involving the children as a team.

What follows is by no means an exhaustive list. Indeed, it would be great to hear of your own ideas and strategies to support mental health. Please visit the Inclusion Hub Facebook page to comment and share ideas.

Hope this helps and we would love to hear from you!

Nikki and Becky



# Supporting our Mental Wellbeing





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Connection

**Unique You**



## Connection

### Connect with yourself:

### Connect with your passions and gifts

What are your passions? What do you love doing but maybe never get time? Our gifts and talents are what make us unique, give us strength, resilience, self-worth and are a great source of joy. Consider how you make time and nurture these aspects of your life. Are you artistic, musical or sporty? What makes you buzz?

As adults, it is so important that we take time to know ourselves. When we know how to find a place of calm within us it can really help us hold a place of calm for our children. Have you ever tried a simple meditation? There are lots of guided meditations on youtube. Here is a simple daily routine you can use to connect and check in with yourself:

### Meditation

Find a calm space to sit and be by yourself. You may wish to light a candle to help you feel focussed in the present or you may wish to simply close your eyes.

Take a few minutes to notice each aspect of you:

- Thoughts – What are my thoughts saying today?
- Physical body - Take your focus and awareness into your body - Scan your physical body – are there any parts of you showing themselves? Do you have any sensations in your body? How is your breath? Are you breathing deeply into your belly?
- Feelings – What feelings and emotions are you experiencing in this moment?

After your meditation you may wish to take a few moment to write some notes in a journal. You Do you notice any patterns over time? Developing a deeper awareness and understanding of ourselves can help us to find ways to meet our own needs.



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## Connection

### Know your own toolkit

As adults we need to know our own toolkit for maintaining a healthy, resilient frame of mind. What activities support you to feel calm and centred? Take time to reflect and gather the things that support your own mental health and wellbeing. How do you have fun, nurture your health and relax?





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Here are some ideas for your own tool kit:

Getting Outdoors and being active: Hikes, Bike rides, camp fires,

Getting creative: Baking, sewing, clay, painting, drawing, knitting, felting

Mindfulness, meditation, yoga, sport and exercise

Listening to favourite music & podcasts

Connecting with friends – phone calls, writing cards and letters, facetime,

Focus on your gifts, talents and passions

Read a book, magazine or newspaper

Study and learn about a subject you have always wanted to

Keep a sketch book

Spending time with pets and animals

Jigsaws, Sudoku, mindfulness colouring books, puzzle books



# Connection

## Connection with Others





## Connection

### Connection with family.

#### Take 20

Remember your connection and the relationship you build with your child is key to having a more positive, happy relationship. It may feel like a challenge at first but if you can possibly schedule 20 minutes early your day when your child has your 1:1, 100% present attention you will be amazed at the impact it can have.

Allow the child to direct the activity so that they feel listened to – they may wish to bake a cake, construct lego or simply dance around the kitchen with you – for 20 minutes - go with it – do it regularly and it *will* pay off!

#### Games nights

Turn off the screen for one evening and hold a weekly games night. Dust off those board games and rewrite your favourite party games. Having fun together is key.

Of course, when we get competitive this can also have the potential for conflict. So ask the children to agree beforehand how they will manage any moments where they feel frustrated or angry. How will their body tell them they are feeling like they need a moment's pause? Use these sessions as a great opportunity to develop their self-awareness so that you can cut the wire before any bomb explodes!

#### Movie and pizza night

Have a regular movie night. Ask the children to prepare healthy snacks such as carrot, pepper, cucumber sticks to accompany their pizza. If you are feeling more ambitious you can even get the children making their own dough and pizza toppings. The choice of movie is also an opportunity for them to work out a fair way of making a shared decision. How do they solve this? Could they create a voting system? Do they want to pull the winner from a hat? How can everyone feel listened to? What ideas do they have?



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## Connection

### Chatting with family and friends

If it's not possible to meet up in person use the wonders of technology to support you to stay connected with important people. Phone them, email, whats-app video call, you could even hand write a letter to tell them how you are.

### Share a Story

What was your favourite book as you were growing up? Do you even have a copy somewhere on your shelves? Gather as a family and read a chapter every day. What will happen next? Who is your favourite character? Does this story teach us anything?

### Uncover and Discover

Sit in a circle around a fire. Can you uncover and discover some wonderful facts about yourself and your family? Here are some questions to get you going. Ask the children to think of their own questions to stimulate conversation.

Who was the first person to visit me as a baby?

What is your funniest memory of me?

What am I best known for in the family?

Where in the world would you most like to visit?

What was my first word?

Make sure the adults answer too!



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## Connection

### Positivity Journal

Ask your child to keep a scrapbook of the positive aspects of their day. Ask them to record 1-3 fantastic moments every day. Gather evidence of the great person they are becoming by getting them to ask the adults around them for ideas. At first you may feel like it is tricky but look for and focus on even the smallest moments. Capture this as a drawing or a word that helps them build a positive self-image. Over time, fill the journal with wonderful examples of being helpful, kind and successful.

# 100 POSITIVE WAYS TO DESCRIBE YOUR CHILD

Active	Determined	Imaginative	Outgoing	Sincere
Adventurous	Dependable	Independent	Open-minded	Skillful
Ambitious	Diligent	Insightful	Passionate	Silly
Authentic	Easy-going	Intelligent	Patient	Sharp
Aware	Empathic	Inventive	Peaceful	Sporty
Balanced	Energetic	Joyful	Positive	Social
Brave	Flexible	Kind	Performer	Spontaneous
Calm	Friendly	Leader	Persevering	Strategist
Carefree	Fun	Mellow	Protective	Systematic
Cheerful	Fierce	Mighty	Problem-solver	Strong
Clever	Happy-go-lucky	Motivated	Quiet	Spirited
Confident	Happy	Mature	Quick-witted	Thoughtful
Comforting	Hard Working	Mindful	Rational	Trusting
Competent	Helpful	Motivated	Reflective	Tenacious
Concentrated	Huggable	Multi-tasker	Resilient	Tender
Creative	Hilarious	Musical	Self-directed	Unique
Curious	Honest	Nice	Self-Starter	Upbeat
Caring	Humorous	Noticer	Spontaneous	Wise
Courteous	Intense	Optimistic	Sensitive	Witty
Cuddly	Inclusive	Organized	Smart	Wonderful



## Connection

### Turn struggles to superpowers

If you are struggling with an aspect of your child's behaviour have a go at using the Lemon Lime Adventures 'Calm to Chaos' workshop videos and support material to transform their struggles into superpowers.

#### STRUGGLES

#### SUPERPOWERS

##### OVERLY SENSITIVE

- Cries over the smallest things
- Battles over socks and shoes
- Doesn't like being alone
- Scared of "new" people

##### UNIQUE

- Thrives with a plan
- Cautious and pays attention to detail
- Empathetic and in tune with others
- Big heart - wants to please others

##### AGGRESSIVE

- Yells and scream often
- Throws things and is destructive
- Crosses arms and shuts down
- Shouts "I HATE YOU" or "GO AWAY"

##### FIERCE

- Passionate about life
- Takes a stand for what they believe in
- Prefers to take the lead
- Strong and powerful

##### DEFIANT

- Refuses to do what is asked
- Always answers with a "no"
- Ignores requests
- Repeatedly breaks rules
- Never follows directions

##### SPIRITED

- Confident in own decisions
- Likes to take the lead
- Social justice warrior
- Strong leadership skills
- Thrives on free choice

##### DISTRACTED

- Struggles to complete tasks
- Needs frequent breaks
- Lacks motivation or desire
- Extremely disorganized
- Loses belongings frequently

##### CREATIVE

- Imaginative
- Free thinker
- Typically thinks out of the box
- Fun and playful
- Tons of ideas

##### HYPERACTIVE

- Becomes "hyper" when guests come over
- Says inappropriate things around others
- Makes jokes at inappropriate times
- Jumps on furniture
- Plays rough with others

##### ADVENTUROUS

- Able to take risks
- Beats to their own drum
- Full of life and energy
- Explores the world they live in
- Inquisitive



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A large, solid red circle with a thin dark red border, centered on the page. Inside the circle, the words "Creativity and Play" are written in a black, sans-serif font, arranged in two lines.

# Creativity and Play



## Creativity and Play

### Having fun making and playing!

#### Sensory Play

Sensory play is great for children. It can be as simple as filling the the kitchen sink and providing a sieve, a few saucepans and clean containers from the recycling. Children can have hours of fun with bubbles and pouring water!

You might also like to try: making salt dough decorations, rolling and cutting with play dough, making kinetic sand\*, creating an outdoor mud cafe, making a construction site with porridge oats and toy diggers, playing with strange textures such as cornflour and water. \* Please find suggested recipes at the end of this pack.

#### Den Building

Den building can be a quick and temporary task with sheets, cushions and blankets or it could be a real project. Ask your child to create a special place where they can go to help them feel calm and relaxed. What special tools and resources will they put in their den? Consider: colouring and puzzle books, music and drawing materials.

#### Puppet Show

Retell your favourite picture book story. You could make finger puppets from card or even sew them with material such as felt and then construct a simple theatre from an old cardboard box.



#### Music and Dance

Ask the children to put together a playlist for different times of the day. Can they create soundtracks for times when you want to dance around the kitchen?



## Creativity and Play

### Construction toys

Construction toys such as lego and connex are great for calming the mind. Your child may wish to go freestyle or you could set a more structured design project.

### Cooking

Looking after our bodies and eating nourishing, healthy food can be a great support to our mental wellbeing. Can your child take responsibility for planning and preparing the evening meal? Maybe they whizz up a healthy smoothie for mid-morning snack?

### Baking

Hold your own Junior Bake Off competition. Depending on confidence levels you could have anything from the best pancake to a themed showstopper creation. Share photos of your creations online with friends. Challenge them to do even better!

### Making jewellery

You can make lovely gift for special people by threading beads onto a simple string or leather. Natural objects can also look great as bracelets and necklaces. Have fun creating your own!



### Fashion Show

Cutting up and recycling old clothes to create a new look can be great fun. You could play with using simple dyes such as turmeric to transform colours. Once ready, you could hold a catwalk parade to showcase your new fashionable styles.



# Outdoors in Nature





## Outdoors in Nature

### Connect with nature

#### Daily walk

If you are not in self-isolation, each day, try to get outdoors and take a walk in nature - your dog will love you for it! If you have a regular walk – try to look at the nature around you in more detail. What trees can you identify? Observe closely - how does the landscape change over time? What plants are emerging from their winter slumber? Can you draw or paint them?

#### Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

Transform an old box into your gratitude treasure chest. Find and create some treasures to go inside. Gather natural objects or make things that represent and celebrate the following things for you:

- The people who make you feel most loved
- A place that makes you feel safe
- Something that makes you laugh
- A pet or animal you love spending time with
- Something that makes you unique
- Something you enjoy doing outdoors
- Something in nature you admire for its beauty
- A gift or talent you offer the world.

#### Birdwatching

Make a simple bird feeder and watch what comes. How many new birds can you learn to spot? Can you recognise them from their call as well as what they look like?





## Outdoors in Nature

### **Cowboy Campfire Stew**

Gather sticks and light a campfire together. Can you cook an entire meal on an open fire? You might like to try cooking cowboy stew – a few tin of baked beans and some sausages sizzle down into a great outdoor lunch.

### **Bike ride**

Go for a bike ride. Do you have a simple trail you can access? If you repeat the same route – can you monitor your fitness? How does your heart rate change at different points on the trail? Are you quick to recover? Can you improve your overall time for the distance?

### **Suck in a big horizon**

Horizons are always so helpful for putting life into perspective. Is there a place you can visit where you can look out over a big view and just take a moment to absorb that horizon? Maybe there's a beach where you can watch the waves lapping or sit at the top of a hill where the birds soar? Find some places that are special for you and create a photo bank, then even if you can't make it there in person you can spend time with the pictures. Consciously draw some of those feelings back when you need them.

### **Chopping Firewood**

Children can help prepare kindling by gathering and snapping up little sticks and depending on your own confidence they may even be able to use chop larger logs. Always work together, under supervision and ensure safe tool use.



## Outdoors in Nature

### **Plant Sunshine**

Now is a great time of year to plant seedlings. Choose the brightest flowers you can find, water them every day and watch them blossom into a cheerful reminder of nature's beauty.

### **Pass on your Magic!**

Adults have skills and magic of their own to pass on and share with their children. Maybe you are an expert on minibeasts, you know how to survive in the wild or have a particular interest in the space and the stars. Whatever you love– if you are passionate your child will sense your enthusiasm and will be likely to love it too.

### **Listening to Natural Rhythms**

Listen out for relaxing natural rhythms of nature, for example: waves lapping on beach, grass swishing, gentle birdsong, leaves rustling in the trees. If you are stuck indoors there are hours you tube tracks you can access, or how about recording your own and then creating your own relaxation soundtrack?



## Useful Websites and Links:

### Recipes

Kinetic sand:

<https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/kinetic-sand-recipe/>

Playdough:

<https://www.netmums.com/activities/how-to-make-playdough>

Salt dough:

<https://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/things-to-do/homemade-salt-dough-recipe-289200>

Inclusion and Improvement Hub Facebook page



Behaviour Support – ideas for positive strategies to manage and turn around challenging behaviour

Lemon Lime Adventures ‘Calm the Chaos’

Lemonlimeadventures.com

## CALM *the* CHAOS™

### What's Hiding Behind the "Misbehaviors" Common Behaviors and What's Really Going On

WHAT "MISBEHAVIOR" YOU SEE	WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON
<b>SENSITIVE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cries over smallest things</li><li>• Gets sad when you leave</li><li>• Doesn't like being alone</li><li>• Can't watch super sad movies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child lacks self-regulation</li><li>• Child is worried about "new" things and need help gradually being introduced to them</li><li>• Child has an inner fear they are unable to verbalize</li></ul>
<b>ANGRY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yells and screams often</li><li>• Throws things and is destructive</li><li>• Crosses arms and shuts down</li><li>• Shouts "I HATE YOU" or "GO AWAY"</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child is unable to recognize emotions</li><li>• Child does not have appropriate coping strategies</li><li>• Child needs help with calming strategies</li><li>• Child is worried about "unknown" feelings</li></ul>
<b>PERFECTIONIST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nervous about breaking rules</li><li>• Can't handle getting things wrong</li><li>• Doesn't ever want to miss school</li><li>• Scared of answering things wrong</li><li>• Struggles with Constructive Criticism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child is struggling with negative thought patterns</li><li>• Child needs help connecting thoughts and actions</li><li>• Child has trouble verbalizing their worries</li><li>• Child thrives on doing things the right way</li></ul>
<b>SHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hides behind your legs</li><li>• Scared of "new" people</li><li>• Fearful of change</li><li>• Doesn't like going new places</li><li>• Prefers playing with "familiar" friends</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child is unable to verbalize big worries and fears</li><li>• Child is cautious of anything new and want to understand the situation fully</li><li>• Child needs help making plans for "new"</li></ul>
<b>OVER-EXCITED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Becomes "hyper" when guests come over</li><li>• Says inappropriate things around others</li><li>• Makes jokes at inappropriate times</li><li>• Jumps on furniture</li><li>• Plays rough with others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child is unable to detect their inner "engine"</li><li>• Child needs help regulating their excitement</li><li>• Child lacks calming strategies for building anticipation</li></ul>