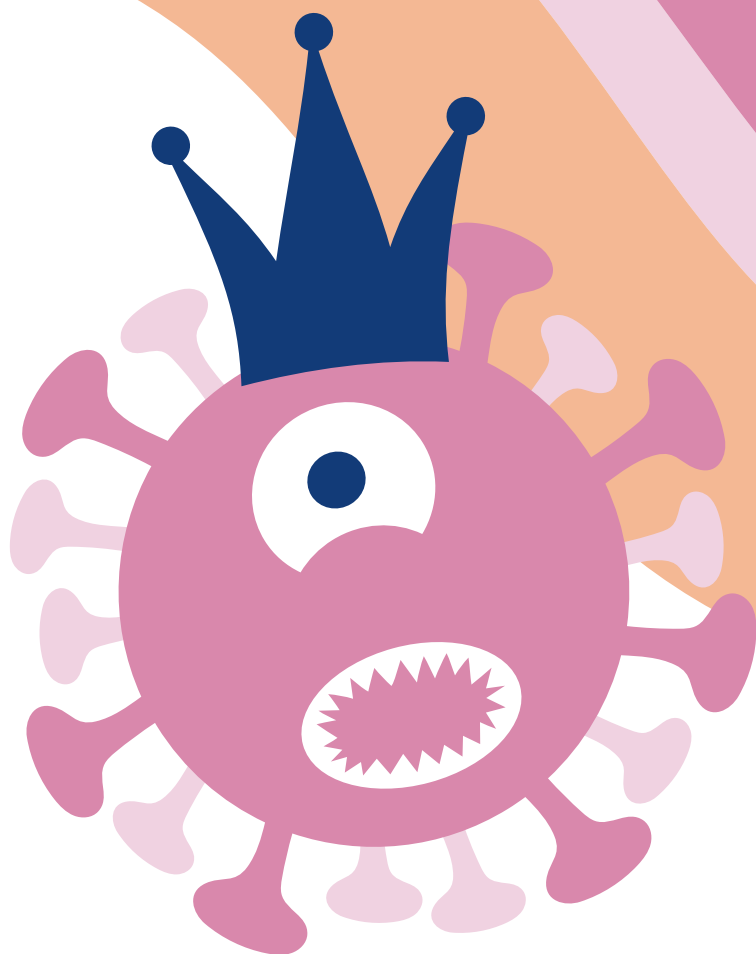


It's ok to worry about COVID-19

A resource pack **for parents** to help manage difficult feelings about the coronavirus that causes COVID-19





This pack was created by
the Early Intervention team
in Child and Adolescent
Mental Health Service
(CAMHS) in NHS Grampian

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Part 1:

Getting to grips with COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

What you need to know to talk to your child about the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.



COVID-19, an illness caused by coronavirus, affects the lungs and airways.

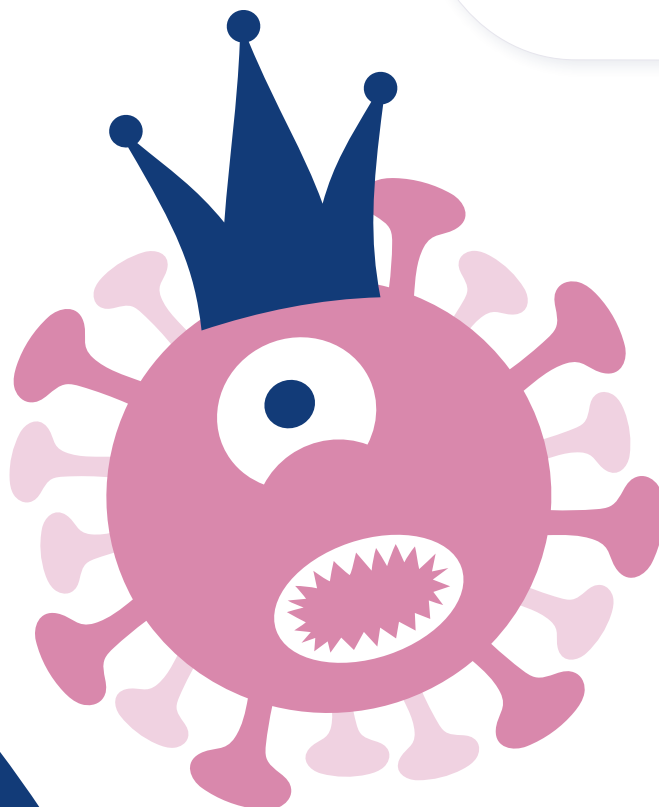
You might be worried about how this could impact your life. For example, you may have been asked to stay at home or avoid other people.

This information is to help you cope if you or your child are:

- + Feeling worried or anxious about COVID-19.
- + Staying at home or avoiding public places as part of social distancing.
- + Having to self-isolate or shield.

Many people are feeling more anxious during these uncertain times.

This is a perfectly normal response.



COVID-19 and the media

Keeping up-to-date and protecting yours, and your child's, mental health.

The media is reporting heavily on COVID-19 and this has caused many people to feel more anxious than usual.

While it is important we keep up-to-date on the most effective ways to keep ourselves safe, it is not always helpful to read every single news article.

Statistics can often sound scary—especially when they are updated multiple times a day. If you or your child are experiencing anxiety as result of the media coverage

on COVID-19, it might not be helpful for you to keep watching live news, use social media, or to have news updates appearing on your devices.

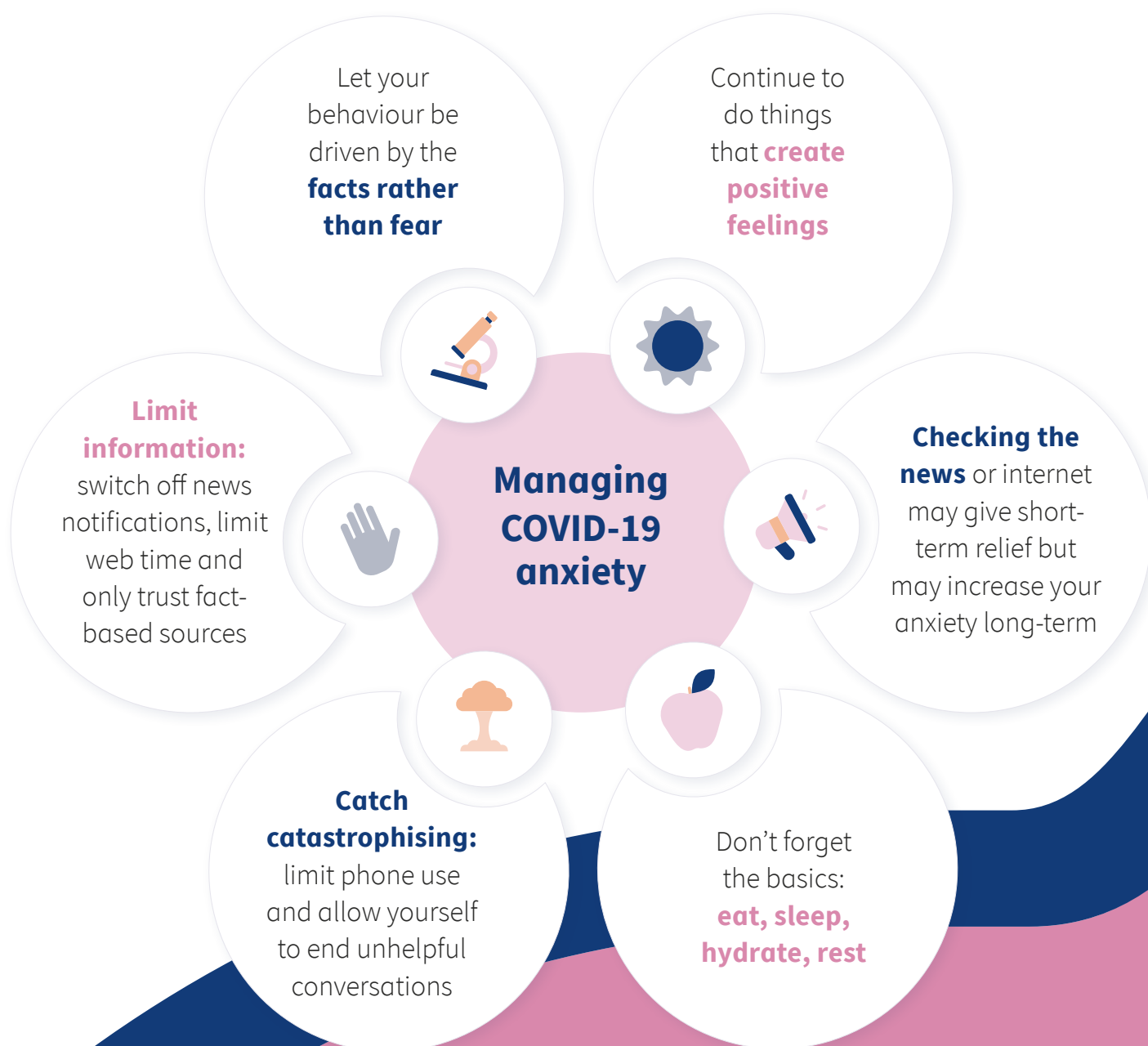
You can instead limit your exposure to the new information by reading only one reliable COVID-19 update per day, for example: www.nhs.uk or www.gov.uk.

Most importantly, make sure your child only has access to age-appropriate information.



Managing COVID-19 anxiety

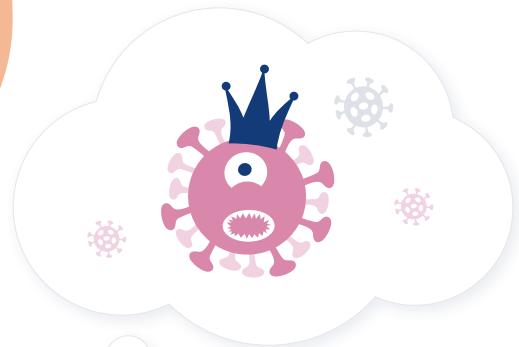
Use the tips below to help manage your child's anxiety about coronavirus and COVID-19.



Should I talk to my child about this?

Knowing how and when to broach the subject of COVID-19 with your child without increasing their anxiety.

Yes! Children already know about coronavirus, so don't avoid talking about it with them.



It's important to be truthful, but remember your child's age. Give them factual information, just adjust the amount and the level of detail you share.

Allowing children to ask questions

It is natural that children will have questions and worries about coronavirus. Giving them the chance to ask these questions is a good way to ease their worries. It's ok if you don't have all the answers, just say "I don't know but I am here to help you".

Reassuring your child

For example, you might say 'we don't yet have a vaccination for coronavirus, but doctors are working very hard on it', or 'a lot of people might get sick, but for most people it is like a cold or flu and they get better'.

Some of the changes, like people wearing face masks or empty supermarket shelves, can be scary for children. They are likely to need to talk to someone they trust to help them understand why these things are happening.

Having difficult conversations with your child

It can be hard for families with older relatives, those in high risk groups, and families who usually receive supported from services.

If there are going to be big life changes, explain these to children using a calm tone of voice. For example, if they're wondering why they can't see their granny, explain that it is a good thing that granny is self-isolating to keep herself safe and they can keep in touch on the phone or using Skype.

Take each moment as it comes and support one another as best as you can.

Part 2:

Staying healthy at home

30 activities to do at home

Try some of these activities with your child—there's something for everyone in this list!



Get creative

- + Draw a character from your favourite book.
- + Make bubbles with washing up liquid.
- + Make a castle out of paper cups.
- + Paint like your favourite artist.
- + Do some mindful colouring.



Get techy

- + Video yourself telling a story to share with a friend.
- + Watch your all-time favourite movie.
- + Watch some funny videos on YouTube together.
- + Facetime hide and seek.
- + Listen to an audio book.



Be a scientist

- + Cornflower and water experiment.
- + Make a straw rocket.
- + Make a playdough coronavirus.
- + Put water and baking soda in a balloon.



Get physical

- + Create your own dance routine.
- + Do child-friendly yoga (YouTube has lots of videos!)
- + Play 'Hide and seek'.
- + Play 'The floor is lava'.
- + Play 'Sleeping logs'



Use your words

- + Write a poem about how you're feeling.
- + Write a short story about your experiences.
- + Read your favourite book.
- + Write a rap.
- + Try and learn a new language.



Have an indoor adventure

- + Design a treasure hunt inside your house.
- + Design and make a fairy door for your house.
- + Design your own board game.
- + Create a mini-golf course inside your house.
- + Create a fort.

Creating a consistent routine

A consistent, structured daily plan is important for some children.

Schools have been shut and you may be practicing social distancing or self-isolating. This means your child might be spending a lot more time at home than usual.

Along with all of the other changes COVID-19 has brought, your child may have lost their daily familiar routine. For some children this can make them feel more worried than usual. Parents can support their child by making a schedule- just like they'd have at school. Try using the blank timetable on the following page to design your own personal routine.

Strict routine may not work for all children. You will need to consider the needs of your child before using the 'home routine' template.

If your child responds well to routine this might be useful, but you should always consider the unique needs of your child first.

It is also important to note that COVID-19 has produced some very unusual circumstances, therefore any schedules are just a guide and should remain flexible.

Home routine template

Use this template to plan a daily home routine for your child.

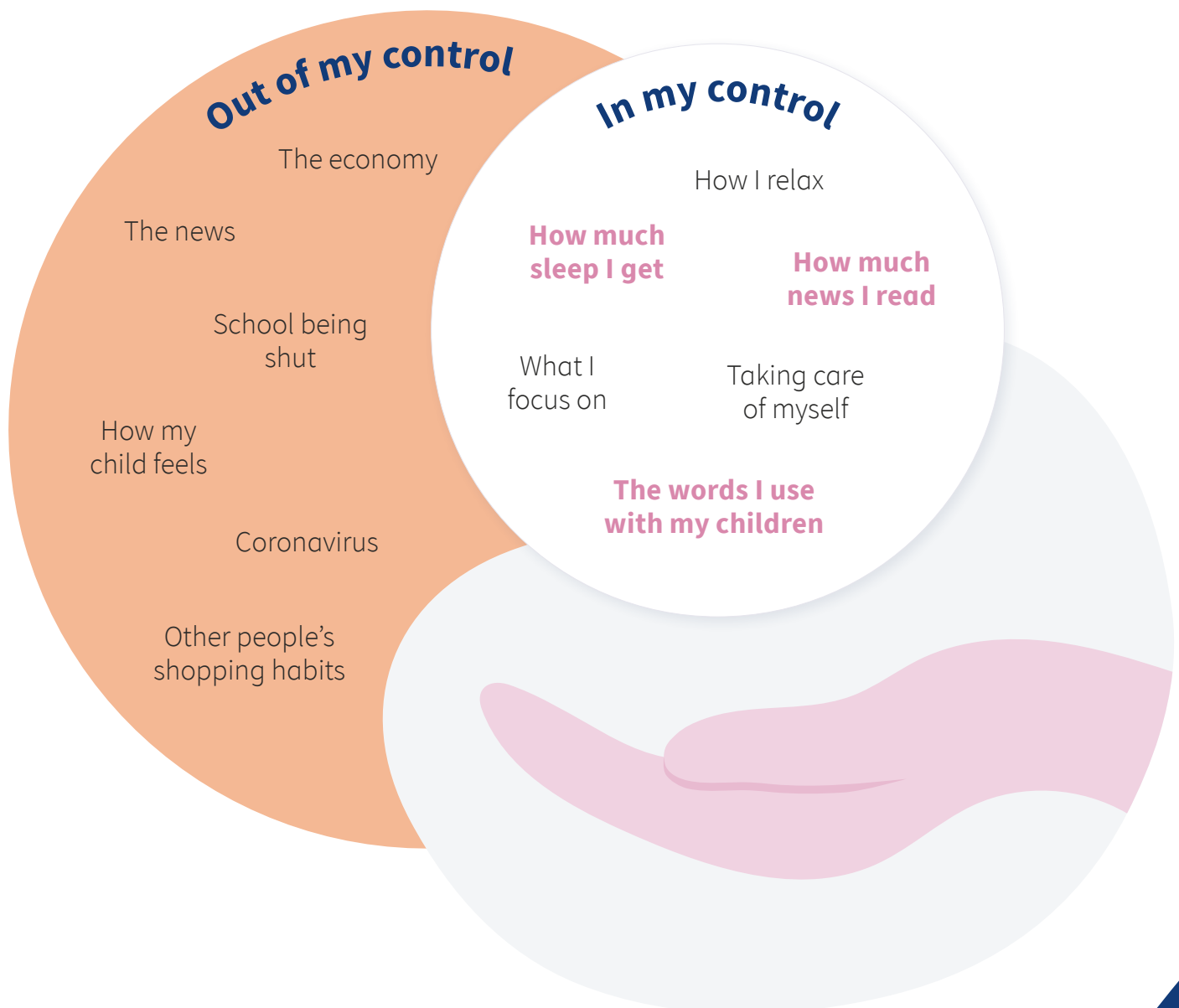
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.00-9.30					
9.30-10.15					
Break time					
10.30-11.15					
Break time					
11.30-12.15					
Lunch time					
1.15-2.00					
Break time					
2.15-3.00					

Things we can control

Use this activity to put the things you can and cannot control into a manageable context.

Understanding what we can and can't control is important. When we focus on things we cannot control we may feel worried and overwhelmed. If we focus on that we can control this can help us feel calmer and less anxious.

Here is a quick activity to help us think about the things we can and cannot control in regards to COVID-19.



Things we can control activity

Use this page to manage your own anxieties by filling in the things you can and cannot control.

Out of my control

In my control

Part 3:

Helping kids with anxiety

Emotion coaching

Help to support you child through the uncertainty of COVID-19, or any other worry they may have.

It may be that your child has some worries about COVID-19 (or in general!) that you cannot reassure them about. At times like this, emotion coaching is a really useful way to support your child to handle and tolerate all the uncertainty.

This may feel uncomfortable to start with, but it is worth the effort.

When children have their feelings acknowledged, they feel safer and this is especially important in these strange times.

Emotion coaching teaches children the important life skill of emotion regulation, not only will this help them in the present, it will also prepare them to handle challenges they will face later in their lives.

Research shows that children who learn about their feelings and emotions have these advantages:

- + Feel calmer and learn to self-regulate.
- + Get sick less often.
- + Stronger relationships with other people.



The 5 steps of emotion coaching

Use these steps as a guide to emotion coaching with your child.

1. Be aware

- + To support your child with emotion coaching, you need to start observing, listening and learning how your child expresses different feelings and emotions.
- + Watch for changes in their facial expression, body language, posture, and tone of voice.
- + Set a good example by talking about feelings and emotions in order to help children build a vocabulary of different feelings.
- + Encourage children to talk about their feelings and emotions.

2. Connect with your child

- + You can use emotional moments as opportunities to connect with your child
- + Allow your child to have their feelings without dismissing, disapproving or avoiding.
- + All feelings are okay, but not all behaviour is okay.

3. Listen and tune-in to your child

- + Your child will feel more secure
- + when they are allowed to express their feelings.
- + Take time to stop, breathe and get curious.
- + Tune-in to the feelings underneath your child's behaviour.
- + Take 5 long slow breaths to help you feel calm.
- + Check what's going on for you. Has your child's behaviour touched a nerve for you? Has it made you feel frustrated? Angry? Scared? Helpless?

4. Name your child's feelings out loud

- + Your child will feel more secure when their feelings are heard.
- + Naming emotions helps to soothe and regulate your child's brain.
- + Ask, rather than telling, them how they are feeling. If they're not sure, offer suggestions for them to consider.

5. Set limits and problem solve together

- + You can allow all of your child's feelings while still setting clear limits on behaviour.
- + Corrections should only be made when feelings have been noted and everyone is calm.
- + Where possible involve your child in problem solving, especially as they get older.
- + Think ahead about tricky and potentially overwhelming situations and be prepared to help the child through them.

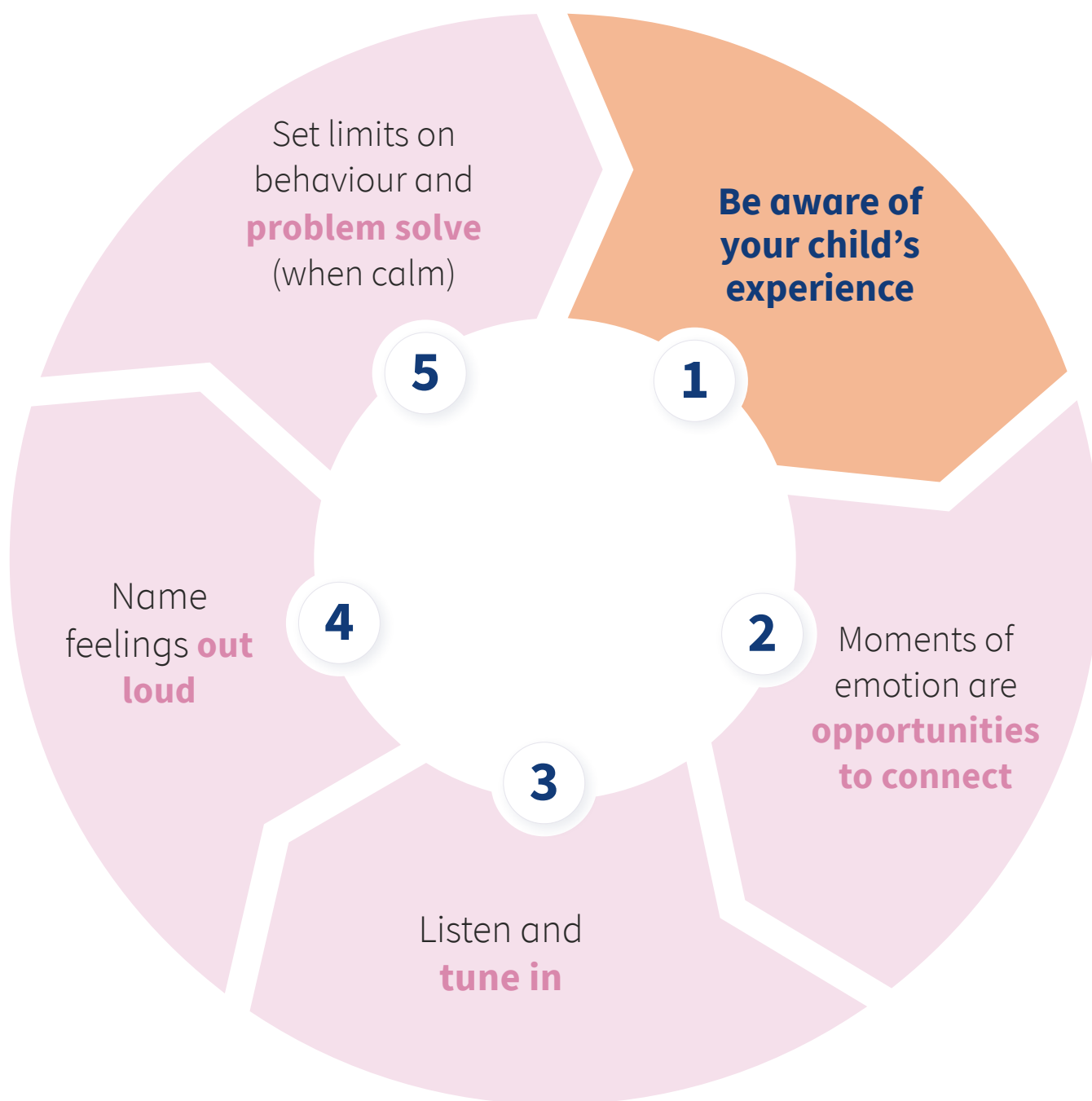
“

I'm thinking you must be feeling really upset because you can't see your friends right now, but it's not okay to shout at mummy.

Let's have a think about some different ways of staying in touch with your friends.

Emotion coaching wheel

Use this diagram to jog your memory on the steps described in the previous pages.



Relaxed breathing for children

An exercise to help your child feel less anxious.

1. Find a quiet place free of distractions. Lie on the floor or sit in a chair. Rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair.

2. We are going to practice breathing slowly in for three and out for three. Imagine your breath is like a wave, slowly rushing in to your body, then slowly running out of your body
1...2...3...1...2...3...

3. As you breathe in feel air fill your lungs and then when they are full of air slowly push the air back out until there is no air left.

4. Now focus on where you are breathing. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other hand on your stomach.

I want you to breathe in through your nose and down into your stomach. You should feel the hand on your stomach move out whilst the hand on your chest stays still. Now practice breathing down in to your stomach, feeling your hand move out as your stomach fills with air, then as you breathe out feel your hand fall.

5. When you have practiced breathing like this you can take your hand away and continue to breathe down into your stomach.


6. Continue this pattern of rhythmic breathing for five to ten minutes.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Exercise to help adults and children let go of anxiety.

- 1.** Begin by finding a comfortable position sitting, standing, or lying down. You can change positions any time during the progressive muscle relaxation exercises to make yourself more comfortable as needed.
- 2.** Start with the muscles in your legs. Tighten all the muscles of your legs. Tense the muscles further. Hold onto this tension. Feel how tight and tense the muscles in your legs are right now. Squeeze the muscles harder, tighter...
- 3.** Continue to hold this tension. Feel the muscles wanting to give up this tension. Hold it for a few moments more...
- 4.** Now relax. Let all the tension go. Feel the muscles in your legs going limp, loose, and relaxed. Notice how relaxed the muscles feel now. Feel the difference between tension and relaxation. Enjoy the pleasant feeling of relaxation in your legs.
- 5.** Now focus on the muscles in your arms. Tighten your shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, and hands. Squeeze your hands into tight fists. Tense the muscles in your arms and hands as tightly as you can. Squeeze harder... harder...
- 6.** Hold the tension in your arms, shoulders, and hands. Feel the tension in these muscles. Hold it for a few moments more...
- 7.** Now release. Let the muscles of your shoulders, arms, and hands relax and go limp. Feel the relaxation as your shoulders lower into a comfortable position and your hands relax at your sides. Allow the muscles in your arms to relax completely.
- 8.** Focus again on your breathing. Slow, even, regular breaths. Breathe in relaxation... and breathe out tension...in relaxation...and out tension... Continue to breathe slowly and rhythmically...



- 
9. Now focus on the muscles of your buttocks. Tighten these muscles as much as you can. Hold this tension...and then release. Relax your muscles.
 10. Tighten the muscles of your back now. Feel your back tightening, pulling your shoulders back and tensing the muscles along your spine. Arch your back slightly as you tighten these muscles. Hold...and relax. Let all the tension go. Feel your back comfortably relaxing into an easy and natural posture.
 11. Turn your attention now to the muscles of your chest and stomach. Tighten and tense these muscles. Tighten them further...hold this tension.... and release. Relax the muscles of your trunk.
 12. Finally, tighten the muscles of your face. Scrunch your eyes shut tightly, wrinkle your nose, and tighten your cheeks and chin. Hold this tension in your face.... and relax. Release all the tension. Feel how relaxed your face is.
 13. Notice all of the muscles in your body...notice how relaxed your muscles feel. Allow any last bits of tension to drain away. Enjoy the relaxation you are experiencing. Notice your calm breathing...your relaxed muscles...Enjoy the relaxation for a few moments...
 14. When you are ready to return to your usual level of alertness and awareness, slowly begin to re-awaken your body. Wiggle your toes and fingers. Swing your arms gently. Shrug your shoulders. Stretch if you like.

You can now end this progressive muscle relaxation exercise feeling calm and refreshed.

Part 4:

The media and anxiety

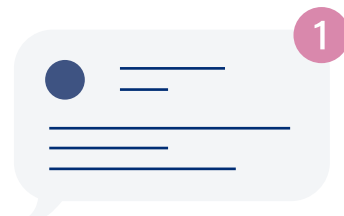
Muting social media accounts

Unhelpful content can be muted on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to varying degrees. This can help you manage worries you may have.

Muting unhelpful words on Twitter

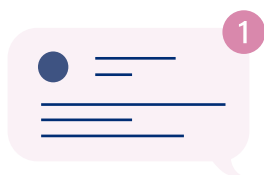
Iphone (app)

1. Go to your Notifications tab.
2. Tap the gear icon.
3. Tap “Muted” words.
4. Tap “+Add muted or phrase”.
5. Type in the word or hashtag you’d like to mute (for example: #COVID-19).
6. Alternatively, long press the word as it appears on a tweet and press “Mute”.



Android (app)

1. Go to your Notifications tab.
2. Tap the gear icon.
3. Tap “Muted” words.
4. Tap “+Add muted or phrase”.
5. Type in the word or hashtag you’d like to mute (for example: #COVID-19).



Muting unhelpful pages or accounts on Facebook



Iphone and Android (app)

Unfortunately you can't mute certain words, but you can mute pages or people if they are sharing or posting content you don't want to see.

1. Click on the three dots at the top right of the post you do not wish to see.
2. Press "Snooze for 30 days".
3. Alternatively you can "Hide all" or "Unfollow".

You can also prioritise whose posts you see:

1. Go onto your menu—this is usually the three lines at the top right on the Facebook app.
2. Scroll down to "Settings & Privacy".
3. Press "Settings".
4. Scroll down to the heading "News Feed settings" and choose "News Feed preferences".
5. Press "Prioritise Who to See First".
6. Choose who you want to see at the top of your News Feed.
7. Press "Done" at the top right.



Under your News Feed Settings you can also see who you have hidden posts from, or unfollowed.

Avoiding recommended content on Instagram

Unfortunately, Instagram does not allow you to block posts or comments left on other users' posts that contain words, phrases or hashtags that you wish to avoid. If you are experiencing distress as a result of content on Instagram it is advisable that you cut

down on the time you spend on Instagram, choose social media sites that do allow you to filter out content you do not wish to see (such as Twitter) and avoid the 'explore' feature that recommends content to you.

Turn off 'explore'

1. Go to your profile.
2. Click on the hamburger (the three lines at the top right) of the screen.
3. Click on 'Settings'.
4. Click on 'Privacy'.
5. Click on 'Comments'.
6. Click on 'Manual filter'.
7. The manual filter bar will turn from grey to blue, then in the space that says 'words separated by commas...' type in words and phrases that you do wish not to see, separating each word or phrase using a comma.



Trustworthy websites

For more information on COVID-19 and providing emotional support to children, see the links below.

If you want to stay updated on the latest developments regarding coronavirus make sure you're checking only reputable sources of information. The following sites are regularly updated with verified information:

[The Scottish Government COVID-19 page](#)

On **WhatsApp** you can text the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** with the word "hi" for the latest information and COVID-19 myth busters: **+41225017596**

[The NHS COVID-19 page](#)

[The WHO COVID-19 page](#)

[The WHO information network page](#)

Links with advice to support emotional wellbeing:

[Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Mind](#)



If you feel you or
your child's worries
are getting bigger,
you or your parent
can contact:

Samaritans: 116 123
www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87
<https://breathingspace.scot>

NHS 24: 111
<https://www.nhs24.scot>

Your local GP

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.



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