

# Helping Children Make Sense of Lockdown

## Ten Tips for Parents

### Acknowledge your own feelings

As parents, many of us will be struggling to manage our own feelings about the pandemic, let alone feel we can cope with talking about it to our children. Allow yourself these feelings. It is not weak or wrong to show these feelings. Your child needs to see the real, human you.

### Be forgiving – to yourself

Forgive yourself for not being perfect. Remind yourself that your children are loved, housed and fed, and don't beat yourself up. You are enough for your children just as you are. Follow your school's advice but don't put that over and above keeping your children happy and yourself sane. And don't believe everything you see on social media - we are all finding this hard!

### Be forgiving – to your children

Remember that your children may be frightened, lonely, sad and worried. Even the most laid-back or compliant youngsters will feel the rug has been pulled out from under their feet. Testing, unusual or difficult behaviour can be a normal response.

### Offer reassurance

It's likely that you will need to reassure your children far more than you think. This can look different in many families depending on your children's ages and personalities. It might be a simple "I love you" or a hug, or it might be more specific: reassurance that hospitals are working, that Granny is OK. You may need to reassure your children that it's OK to feel sad, lonely, angry or afraid, and that you feel those things too.

### Play

Children communicate, learn and express themselves through play. They need this. Allow them time to play with no agenda and no pressure. If you can, play with them.

### Ride the waves

Children talk when they are ready, and at times you cannot predict or control. Their real concerns are likely to come out in an everyday context – doing Lego, for example, or cleaning out the hamster.

### Plan your engagement with media

Rolling news can cause a lot of anxiety, especially to children. Be aware that listening ears are omnipresent. Decide in advance what media you would like to watch and listen to and when - and stick to the plan.

### Allow the children some control

Uncertainty about the future can be stressful. Give your children specific things to do to feel in control. Let them make some decisions for themselves.

### Establish routines

It's normal for a lack of routine and structure to make children and young people feel upset. It can be challenging to find a routine that works for everyone, especially if you're juggling working from home with taking care of children. Structure can help children see what's happening next in the day and alleviate anxiety.

### Listen and empathise

Listen to what their concerns really are. Try to 'listen' for their feelings. Acknowledging how they feel – "I see you are worried" – will make them feel valued and understood.

For more information and resources:  
<https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk>  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk), [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)  
[www.christchurchhitchin.org.uk](http://www.christchurchhitchin.org.uk)



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