

Tips to support your child's wellbeing at home

All we can strive for is to offer warmth, presence, attentiveness and consistency in a good enough way when caring for others and ourselves.

Please look after yourself too and refer to SMH “tips for parents/carers for staying well at home” available on www.smh.ie (CYP Services section)

Structure, structure, structure

Have a routine each day.

Have a regular wake up, work time, lunch time, play time, night time routine.

- Can your child make choices? Try not overwhelm, but involve them when possible.
- If you can, plan your day with your child and provide choices like juice or water.
- Mix up low and high energy activities e.g. breakfast, park walk, puzzles, help with lunch, garden break, meal time.
- Screen time is inevitable and can be important downtime for everyone –but not too much and mix it up
- Build in treats and rewards – notice and comment on good listening, good working, sharing etc.
- Table top tasks can be overwhelming –look for learning opportunities in everyday task.
- For more information on visual schedules please see the SMH “communication resource pack”

Explain what is happening and why

If your child is confused or worried at this time you can reassure them:

- Create special time to talk, listen, and play with your child. “Tuning-in” takes time and effort, but children respond well to responsive and supportive time with important adults.
- Children communicate their worries in different ways –through sound and movement, play and interaction, seeking and avoiding –try and “tune-in” to their emotional worlds. By showing that feelings are important in your family and that you are trying to understand their worries you can make your child feel safer.
- Build this “tuning-in time” into your routine every day.
- Label the feelings saying “sad”, “angry”, “happy” and use visuals as needed.
- Explain in simple clear language and use a visual story if you need to. Please visit the St Michael's House (under CYP section) website for social stories related to the Covid19 emergency.

Does your child need a retreat ?

- It can be helpful for some children to have quiet time to process complex thoughts and feelings.
- Free play – create space for low demand supervised play with your child
- Safe space – does your child have a quiet place to retreat to in your house. Use their bedrooms, a tent, or create make shift den with sheets and chairs – can this be done safely in your home?

Be active

Get moving and stay active each day.

- Get outside if you can. Walking or even sitting in nature for short periods every day can be good for your child's wellbeing – being in nature can be as simple as sitting under a tree!
- Be active in the home - help setting the table, gardening, baking, singing, arts and craft
- There are many free online exercise classes e.g. <https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html>

Connect with other people

It is still possible to stay in touch with others without meeting in person.

- Arrange video call with someone who your child likes or is familiar with.
- You and your child are used to spending time together and time apart – build this into our daily routine.
- Create activities that mean you have time together like baking, colouring, drawing, eating, watching TV and time apart like screen time or activity with different people at home.

Take notice – what can I learn about my child's actions and reactions?

Ask what is happening and why is this happening now?

- What does your child need now?
- Do they need a change of task?
- Do they need a change of pace?
- Do they need to change place?
- Do they need to use more or less energy?
- Do they need more or less sensory input?
- Ask yourself how you are feeling – calm, tired, stressed, worried – does this have an impact on you are reading – what do I need right now?

Keep learning

Can you or your child learn something new in this time?

- What can your child do – can you build on existing skills?
- Not all learning happens in “table top” tasks – what can you learn from gardening together, cooking together, cleaning up together – what are the everyday tasks you can do together?
- Break new tasks down into bite-size bit - build skills and confidence through success
- Make “Goldilocks’ porridge” – tasks that not too easy and not too hard.
- But always allow yourself to make mistakes - allow yourself to be a good enough parent, partner, sibling, child at this time and be kind to yourself.

Gift of giving

It is easy to give, but a little harder to receive gifts – look out for the everyday and ordinary but special things that you might be given from others. Gifts can be in form of shrug or a hug!

Everything your children do will tell you something about how they are feeling and making sense of things.