



You've got this!

During these tough times, we all need a little reminder that we can cope. With self-care, support and some little tips, we can all get through this together.

oneday
at a time

It is hard being a parent and many of you will be trying to balance working from home, educating your child, as well as the usual household jobs such as cooking, cleaning etc. This combined with the anxiety and worry about coronavirus and the isolation that some of us feel, it is natural that at times we feel under pressure.



As tricky as it seems, try not to focus on the big picture. In certain times, none of us know what the big picture actually is and speculating won't help. Focus on the now – today – and maybe tomorrow or the next few days.

Focus on the things that are in your control

You can't control everything. In times of crisis there is an awful lot out of your control. But focusing on things you can control will help. You can handle your routines, your schedule, your reaction and responses to situation.

Be prepared to be flexible

For those of you who like to be in control and to be organised, this can be difficult. But understanding that you may need to be flexible and not feel guilty when you don't get something done is a really important aspect of self-care. You might have hoped that the children would have enjoyed a certain activity and be kept occupied or you might have hoped to clean the kitchen. But that's ok, plans change and there is always tomorrow.



Celebrate all achievements



While it's important to not beat yourself up about the things you didn't get done, it's just as important to congratulate yourself on the things you did get done – no matter how small. Focus on the things that did get achieved or completed and be proud of yourself just for getting through another day.

Plan something to make you smile. This could be going for a walk in the sunshine, spending time in the garden, a family board game or watching something on TV. Or it could be some quiet time with a book in the bath. Having something to look forward to, no matter how small, can really help get you through the more challenging aspects of the day.

Routine

It can be helpful to try to stick to a routine to give more structure to your day and to help your child to know what is planned and expected.

- Plan how you'll spend your time. It might help to write this down on paper and put this up on the wall.
- Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. Get up at the same time as normal, follow your usual morning routines and go to bed at your usual time.
- If you aren't happy with your usual routine, this might be the chance to do things differently. For example, you could go to bed earlier, spend more time cooking or do other things you don't usually have time for.
- Agree on a household routine. Try to give everyone you live with a say in this agreement.
- Try to respect each other's privacy and give each other space.

Mindful moments in difficult times

During difficult and unsettling times, it can feel as if our minds are in a real whirl. There seems to be so much to keep track of, with routines changing and priorities shifting, we feel there is no space to clear out thoughts. Finding time and space each day to allow our mind to focus on whatever it is we are doing, rather than multi-tasking or listing all that we need to do next, can really help us gain some much needed clarity. This is where mindfulness can help.

Mindfulness is essentially a form of attention training, although the practice is more involved and expansive than simply learning to focus. It is about training our minds to dwell in the present moment, rather than being drawn away.

How to practice mindfulness

Choose an activity to do mindfully throughout the day for 1, 2 or 5 minutes. This activity can be something you would do normally, such as drinking a cup of tea, walking or washing the dishes. Try to really focus on what you are doing. Whatever you choose to do, be in that moment, in the present. See, hear, smell, touch, feel and breathe in the moment. Notice whenever other thoughts or sensations come to mind, acknowledge them and let them go. Then refocus on your mindful activity.



Relaxation

Relaxation doesn't have to take up lots of time. Just stepping away from something stressful for a few minutes or taking time away from your normal routine and thoughts can give you enough space and distance to feel calmer. Relaxation doesn't have to mean sitting still, gentle exercise can help you relax too.

Focus on your breathing

Learning to breathe more deeply can help you feel a lot calmer. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to keep your shoulders down and relaxed and place your hand on your stomach – it should rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out. Count as you breathe. Start by counting, "1,2,3,4" as you breathe in and "1,2,3,4" as you breathe out. Try to work out what's comfortable for you.



Remember we are all in this together and staff are on hand at nursery if you need any advice on parenting, activities to do at home, funding or just need a different adult to talk to.