

Home Life During COVID-19



The spread of COVID-19 has seen many businesses and schools close and it has also caused many to have to social distance, isolate or be on lockdown.

As such, many of us are finding that we are at home a lot more than usual and perhaps with many more people than normal. For many of us this may be completely new and for most the change came very abruptly. Many challenges and difficulties will arise whilst we spend more time than usual at home. This helpsheet contains some useful information and tips for overcoming difficulties that we may face. If you would like to talk further about any of the issues discussed, please make contact with our AdviceLine by email; assist@cic-eap.co.uk.

Government Advice on Staying Home:

- ▶ The UK Government are now asking to stay at home at all times unless for essential work, shopping or exercise
- ▶ The UK Government are asking those who develop a new continuous cough and/or a fever to self-isolate for 7 days since the onset of these symptoms

- ▶ If you live with others and you develop symptoms, those in your household must stay at home for 14 days.
- ▶ Vulnerable individuals in your home should be moved to a safe environment if possible, and if not possible keep as much distance from these individuals as possible
- ▶ Should you develop symptoms do not go to your GP, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 and you do not need to be tested
- ▶ If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999
- ▶ Do not invite or allow social visitors, such as other friends and family, to enter your home

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Working From Home

During this period, many of us are working from home. This can be difficult as we are used to our work taking place in a designated workplace outside of the home. Working from home can cause no end of difficulties; children at home, limited space, and lack of equipment to name a few. There are many small things we can implement to make the transition as painless as possible. We have put together some tips for whilst you;

- ▶ Follow your usual routine as much as possible.
- ▶ Set out a designated work area – no matter how small.
- ▶ Remove any distractions where possible.
- ▶ Maintain regular hours. Be on time and ensure you finish work at your designated time.
- ▶ Take your usual breaks and lunch.
- ▶ Make time for some exercise, a 15 minute walk will go a long way.
- ▶ Stay connected with your team. Utilise phone calls and video calls to keep a team spirit.
- ▶ Understand you may not work at your usual capacity.
- ▶ Take advantage of the perks of working from home!

School Children at Home

With all schools across the UK having been closed, this has become a very strange time for our children, as well as us. All of a sudden, they are at home when they would usually be at school, they are not seeing their peers, and their parents are also at home. The presence of our children at home can bring a number of challenges, and we suggest the following to help make this time easier:

- ▶ **Make a Timetable.** Your children have a timetable at school and it can help them to keep one whilst they are at home. This gives structure to their day as well as yours. Include your children in this process, allow them to choose – where possible – what time they would like to do certain activities. Be sure to also schedule in breaks, some fun time and time with the other people at home – even if 15 minutes. Include some exercise, your children's activity levels may decline during this period so it is important to fit this in. try some jump rope or dancing.
- ▶ **Let Them Explore.** We are not all teachers and although the school may provide some work for the children to do at home, it may not always be enough to fill the day. Use this as an opportunity for children to learn about things they would like to. There are many things are children are interested in that they do not always get to cover in school or do not cover for a long time. This can also extend to the way they like to learn. Some children will benefit from songs, some from tasks, others from books, and some from videos.
- ▶ **Quality Time.** Our children are as anxious as we are right now, although they may not be expressing it. Be sure to dedicate some time to them during their 'school' day. It may be uncomfortable for them to have you there but not having constant open access to you. When you would usually be going to grab a coffee, or having a chat with a colleague, spend it with your children. Ask them how their day is going, do they have any questions, make time for a little game. 20 minutes of good connected time together can go a long way in these difficult times.

Home Life During COVID-19

- ▶ **Resources.** We are fortunate that there are so many resources we are able to make use of during this time. Many apps are both education and fun for children. There are workout videos on Youtube for children that can take place of a PE lesson. There are countless books that can help your children through their home-learning. There is a large catalogue of websites with educational material for children.
- ▶ **This is an Opportunity.** Despite the struggles, make an effort to see this an opportunity to spend more time together. Simply being in close proximity is a bonding opportunity for both of you. Do that thing together that you always want to but did not have time to. Make lunch together. Let your child show you their schoolwork, tell them about your work. Take a walk together. Take advantage of the extra time together where possible.
- ▶ **Connect Them.** School is the biggest contributor to our children's social life and all of a sudden, that is taken from them. Try to stay in touch with their friends during this time. Can they write them a letter? Let them send an email to their parent. They can Skype their friends during lunch – this interaction in the middle of the day would help replicate a normal lunchtime. Speak with a group of parents and arrange a group Skype session – they could each practise something they are learning, have show and tell or just have a chat.

Pre-School Children at Home

We may also have pre-school children at home. This could be due to their day-care or babysitter not operating, or due to financial changes, these things are no longer sustainable. With many parents working from home, we may decide to keep our toddlers at home. Keeping toddlers entertained, occupied and ensuring they are still learning is no small feat, the following tips can make this a little easier;

- ▶ **Books and Songs.** Make the most of the books you have, reading is a great way for toddlers to learn and interact with you. You can also incorporate nursery rhymes and song learning into this exercise.
- ▶ **Use Household Items.** Children love to play with water, use the bath, sink or just a bowl with some water and let them use cups, bottles, straws, sponges and spoons

or other household items to play with the water. Make acoustic toys such as putting pasta and rice in a bottle to create a shaker. Set up a pretend kitchen area and let them play at cooking, they can use pots and pans, rice, pasta, lentils and dried beans to serve as their 'ingredients'. Make sock puppets and give your toddlers a show. Play does not have to be difficult or expensive and often our toddlers are easily occupied with items we already have in the home; just a little imagination goes a long way!

- ▶ **TV and Tablets.** Although it is best to limit the time our children spend watching TV and playing on computers, tablets or phones, these can be extremely useful in keeping our children occupied and can be educational. Choose a show or app that you feel is both entertaining for your children but is also interactive. The NHS recommend no more than half an hour for children under 2 and no more than hour for those between 3-5 years old.
- ▶ **Speak With Your Employer.** If you are working from home with a toddler, be open with your employer and let them know that due to the current circumstances, you have your toddler with you at home. This will allow them to be more understanding of your situation and will help with things such as team meetings, working times and so forth. Discuss any difficulties you fear facing during this time with your colleagues and come to solutions or compromises together.



Home Life During COVID-19

- ▶ **Work Together.** If you have two parents, another care-giver/guardian or older children at home, ask if they can help with looking after the toddler(s) in the house. Take it in turns as to who will occupy the children and put it in a diary. This allows you time to schedule in any meetings you may have or calls you need to make, as well as allowing you to take some 'me time'.

Teenagers at Home

- ▶ **There Will Be More Screen Time.** For most teenagers, their social life is everything. Nowadays, much of their interaction is through their mobile phones, tablets or video game consoles. Whilst we may usually be frustrated by the amount of time they spend on these devices, during a time like this, those social outlets are a lifeline for our children. Encourage them to FaceTime their friends, let them spend what seems like hours on their Instagram or Snapchatting their friends, try to tolerate them hollering down a headset whilst playing video games with friends online.
- ▶ **Retain Their Independence.** Many teenagers may have just been getting their first taste of independence and have now had that taken from them. A sense of independence can come in many shapes and forms – although we are restricted for the time being. Their



own private space, being in charge of their (and maybe the rest of the family's) meals, making grocery runs and encouraging them to go outside to exercise can all help keep a sense of independence for teenagers during this time.

- ▶ **Discuss the Pandemic.** Our teenagers are able to understand what is going on in the world right now in relation to COVID-19. Given their high usage on social media, they are very exposed to both the positive and negative responses and news. It is important you show your teenagers that you respect their intelligence and talk openly with them about the pandemic. Listen to any anxieties they may have and help them to work through these. Help them find reputable sources for news on the virus to prevent any unnecessary anxiety.
- ▶ **Be Open About Feelings.** Adolescence is a difficult time for many in terms of emotions and feelings at the best of times; never mind when there is a pandemic surrounding them. Be sure to have one-on-one time where you teenagers can let you know how they are feeling, create a safe space for them to express any fears or anxieties they may be experiencing. It is important that our children – teenagers and otherwise – know that it is very normal to feel uneasy during this pandemic and that they are able to talk about these feelings.
- ▶ **Inform Your Boss.** As with our younger children, it is important that your employer and colleagues that our teenagers at home as well. Although we can communicate and reason more with our older children, they can also cause disruptions. It is important your employer knows you have teenagers at home as well – perhaps to explain the video game noise in the background!

Everyone at Home

Other than our children, there may now be partners, adult siblings, roommates and parents at home during this period of time. We may even have people moving back in due to the financial difficulty many are facing or a vulnerable person in their household. How do you manage with having various age groups, various family roles and so forth at home all at once, all the time?

Home Life During COVID-19



- ▶ **Have a Discussion.** If there are going to be many of your household at home now, sit down and talk about it. Discuss what you all need in terms of space, time and so on. Lay down some rules. Talk to each other and be open about the difficulties you will face during this time but think how you can through this together as a family. Think about the strengths each of you possess and how this may help you through this time. Take it as an opportunity to spend some time together, even if in silence.
- ▶ **Respect Alone Time.** It is as important to make quality time for each other, as it is to have your own space. With everybody being at home, many of us will become overwhelmed by the amount of time spent together in close proximity. Especially those of us who live in smaller living quarters. Be sure to make time for alone time and respect each other's need for this. Do not take it personal if one of you does not want to interact much for a period to time.
- ▶ **The Environment.** In this time, it is going to be important to ensure everyone has enough space to do what they need to do and feel comfortable. If you have adults working from home and also children learning from home, it is important that each has a space they feel is their own – even in smaller homes, this can be achieved though it is a little more difficult. This can be as simple as one side of the sofa is one person's work place and the other is someone else's. It is also important to cooperate on environmental factors such as volumes, lighting, food and so on. Be considerate of those you are now at home with and create an environment that works well for each of you.

- ▶ **Get Outside.** The UK Government are still allowing individuals outside for one form of exercise a day and also for essential trips – such as to a supermarket or pharmacy. Make the most of this time out of the house. If you need to pick up a small amount of groceries, consider walking rather than driving if possible. Be sure to take some exercise outside, this is great not only for our physical health but also our mental health. The time outdoors gives us some alone time, fresh air and a change of scenery. Exercise can take many forms; a walk, a jog, some jump rope outside, a cycle, take a football and run some drills on your own, consider following an online workout in a quiet space in a park. If you have a garden or balcony be sure to take advantage of this. If you do not have this, simply opening your window and inhaling some fresh air for a few moments can be greatly beneficial.

Contact Us:

If you are struggling with any of the subjects covered in this helpsheet, we urge you to make contact with our AdviceLine who will be happy to help you. Currently, due to large call volumes, it may be quicker for you to make contact with us via email, a member of our team will then get back to you as soon as possible.

Email: assist@cic-eap.co.uk

Resources:

NHS on COVID-19: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Government advice on staying at home: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>

Michigan University on Keeping Children Happy at Home: <https://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/childrens-health/stuck-at-home-6-ways-to-keep-your-kids-healthy-and-happy>

Unicef on Teenage Mental Health during COVID-19; <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Radio Times on Children's Entertainment: <https://www.radiotimes.com/news/tv/2020-03-26/kids-entertainment-tv/>