

Wellbeing during lockdown

Lockdown has presented a challenge for everyone, and affected all of us in different ways. We know that some families have lost loved ones, some parents and carers are still having to work in the NHS and other frontline jobs, and lots of us are struggling and face uncertainty in the future for ourselves, friends and families in terms of jobs and income.

At the same time, you are all doing amazing jobs of looking after your children at home during this time, not only keeping your children safe but also showing your creative skills as teachers and educators, often as well as trying to work from home! Our main message is well done, and don't put too much pressure on yourselves if things feel difficult!

At Ann Tayler and Clapton Park we have been focusing this year on developing our wellbeing curriculum, supporting children to recognise and talk about their feelings, and approaching children's behaviour informed by our understanding of their needs. We have put together some of the resources and advice we use at nursery as well as some links to other resources. We hope you find them useful during this time.

Coronavirus from the perspective of a young child

Dr Camilla Rosan of the Anna Freud Centre offers this advice:

From the perspective of a baby or young child The coronavirus outbreak has provoked some level of anxiety and fear in everyone. In this uncharted territory, everyone - from babies to adults - is affected. We are all feeling a mix of emotions, with most of us being placed in situations which are new to us.

It is easy to think that babies, toddlers or very young children (under the age of five) will have 'missed' the sudden change to life as we know it. We may assume that, in their early years, children do not notice changes affecting their daily routines, or that somehow they are less affected by them than adults. However, research tells us very clearly that this is not the case. As the youngest members of our society, their lives will be altered too.

Babies and young children are likely to be affected by the anxiety of their parents and other adults. They will also be directly affected by huge changes to their routine, such as no longer being able to attend nursery or play group. During this time, children will experience a variety of losses, including not being able to see family members or no longer having contact with playmates. Once we leave this coronavirus period, they may move on to school having missed out on the important 'goodbyes' to their pre-school settings.

All of this will take its toll on very young children, even if they do not yet have the ability to put this into words. As parents, carers and early years professionals, we need to be alert to this and seek to lessen its impact.

Please follow the link for more detail and to find practical ways to offer support:

https://www.annafreud.org/insights/blogs/2020/04/coronavirus-4-from-the-perspective-of-a-baby-or-young-child/?fbclid=IwAR3SdjQAIBkGqNYiNejISFOELan57Fb-Kp3ySo_sbcve92EVJlhT1rNymA

Boxful of Feelings



You will recognise the attached 'how are you feeling' posters that we use at nursery along with other resources from 'Boxful of Feelings'. These can be used as part of a daily routine to 'check-in' (how are you feeling today, talk about why? – the whole family can take a turn). They can also be used to help mirror back emotions, eg if a child is upset, 'it seems like you are a bit sad at the moment, is that right?'

Recognising and naming emotions helps a child to feel contained, to know that an adult can see/hear how they are feeling. We often want to make it better, but this may seem like we're dismissing the problem. For example if a toy gets broken, "don't cry we'll get another one" might seem reassuring, but acknowledging their feelings first is often better, e.g. "Oh dear, you're sad because teddy lost its ear! I would be sad too, it's hard when things break... I wonder what we could do to fix it".

You can also use the posters to discuss how characters from books are feeling, this helps children discuss difficult emotions in a safe way.

Another thing we do in nursery is to have a go at drawing how we are feeling. For some children this might be drawing figures, but for others it might be scribbles or abstract shapes. What is more important is the process and children being able to express themselves.

Top tips for behaviour management

Every child has different needs and parents develop their own strategies to support them, please see these as a toolkit of advice that often works, to add to all of the things you already do well to support your children, rather than a list that you have to do perfectly all the time!

Think about your own wellbeing/stress levels How is the situation affecting you –are there things you can do for your own wellbeing (taking some deep breaths, exercise, relaxation) that will help you to be able to support your child(ren)?

Try to stick to consistent routines and rules, especially around mealtimes and bedtimes *This helps children to feel safe, know what's happening next and know there are consistent boundaries.*

Give your child fair warning before an activity ends e.g. “you’ve got 5 minutes left on the ipad then it will be time to for lunch”. Make sure you are consistent and firm with this!

Get down to your child’s level *Think about your own body language and how this might come across.*

Acknowledge your child’s feelings e.g. “It looks like you’re feeling angry/sad...”

Make sure you know that your child is capable of doing what you are asking *Don’t set expectations that are too difficult for their stage of development. Also bear in mind other factors, don’t ask too much if they are tired/hungry/distressed.*

Avoid confrontation *Give and take isn’t a sign of weakness. Giving your child a choice of two options and some control over what will happen, within the boundaries offered by the adult, will help your child develop a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour. Use distractions and humour to help avoid difficult situations. Stay calm and in control.*

Give your child time to calm down *before trying to ask, explain or solve problems with them*

Involve your child in problem solving *Use the High Scope conflict resolution steps for conflicts between siblings.*

Give specific praise *when they do the right thing, e.g. “Well done, I love how you ...”*
Remember, what you pay attention to grows.

Take the opportunity for reattunement *If there has been conflict or difficult times, find a positive way to come back together and reattune*

Educational Psychology Service Telephone Advice Line

If you would like support and advice, we are offering an opportunity for you to talk about your child/children with an educational psychologist for up to 30 minutes on our phone line. This service runs from 10 am -1pm and 2-4 pm on Wednesdays.

We can help by talking through your concerns, making suggestions for practical activities, sending resources, signposting to other services, answering questions and generally helping you to think about ways to support your child/children across a wide range of areas. This service is open to all families living in Hackney.

We can give you advice about:

- behaviour at home
- learning at home
- meeting your child's special educational needs
- anxiety, wellbeing and mental health
- putting routines in place while your child is learning at home
- explaining the Coronavirus and how to keep safe

Call the Educational Psychology Service on 020 8820 5719 on Wednesdays between 10am -12.30pm and 2pm – 4.30pm

Wellbeing Advice and Resources for parents

Hackney Learning Trust has made available a resource bank to support parent and practitioners mental health and wellbeing during these very difficult times:

<https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>

See also the Institute of Health Visiting's 'Parenting through Coronavirus' website which provides a wealth of trusted information for parents around health and wellbeing:

<https://ihv.org.uk/families/parenting-through-coronavirus-covid-19/>

How are you feeling?



happy



angry



sad



scared

How are you feeling?



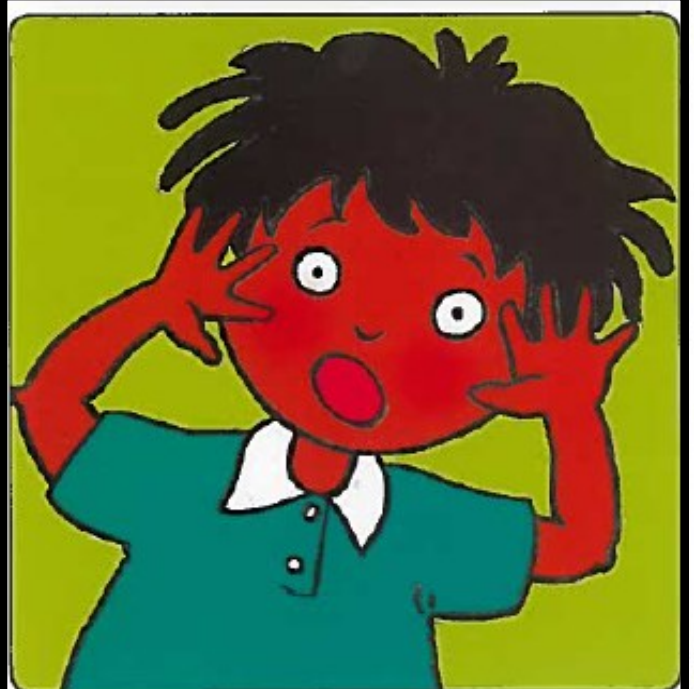
happy



angry



sad



scared

Steps in Resolving Conflicts

1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.

- ▶ Place yourself between the children, on their level.
- ▶ Use a calm voice and gentle touch.
- ▶ Remain neutral rather than take sides.

2. Acknowledge children's feelings.

- ▶ "You look really upset."
- ▶ Let children know you need to hold any object in question.

3. Gather information.

- ▶ "What's the problem?"

4. Restate the problem.

- ▶ "So the problem is . . ."

5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.

- ▶ "What can we do to solve this problem?"
- ▶ Encourage children to think of a solution.

6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.

- ▶ "You solved the problem!"
- ▶ Stay near the children.

