



Supporting Parental Wellbeing

1. Balancing work and home life

It's not easy balancing your work and home life, but how you manage it can make quite a difference to your relationship with your family. Having a balance between work and home – being able to work in a way which fits around family commitments and isn't restricted to the 9 to 5 – boosts self-esteem as you're not always worrying about neglecting your responsibilities in any area, making you feel more in control of your life. Your family will be happier to see more of you, and you'll have a life away from home.

2. Look after yourself

Parents often spend all their time looking after everyone else in the family and forget about themselves. If you don't look after yourself, you can end up feeling miserable and resentful, and you won't be able to give your children the support they need. Admit to yourself that you actually have feelings and needs of your own. It's not selfish to treat yourself once in a while! It doesn't have to be expensive - but putting aside some time to do just what YOU want to do, even if it's only 10 minutes a day - is so important.

3. Discipline

Rather than thinking of discipline as a punishment, you should use it as a way of teaching your children how to meet their needs without hurting or offending anyone. While you may be angry, it can help to keep calm and teach your child how he or she could have handled the situation differently, and how he or she can go about it differently next time. This way is both more positive and more constructive.

4. Setting Boundaries

We often use boundaries to protect children from harm or danger. But it is important that you try to explain why boundaries are there, rather than issuing orders – for instance, if you pull them away from an open fire explain why. Children may be reluctant to follow instructions if parents command them. However, an explanation as to why the instructions are important will help your child understand, and therefore cooperate.

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5. Communication

Communication is important – during both the good and the tough times. Children often find it hard to put their feelings into words and just knowing that their parents are listening can be enough. Talk about yourself – not just about your problems but about your daily life. If they feel included in the things you do they are more likely to see the value of including you in the things they do.

6. Quality Time

Try to organise some time together as a family a few times a week – perhaps three meals a week you could sit down to eat as a family. This will give you all a chance to connect and talk about the important issues, as well as the more fun topics. Ask your children to help you with the chores or to run errands. They may protest but they will feel included in your life rather than being an outsider.

7. Joint Decisions

With older children, it is normal for them to test the limits of boundaries to see what they can get away with. You may need to adapt boundaries as children grow into teens – it can even help to involve your child in the negotiation of new boundaries. Too many restrictions will be hard to keep on top of, so it is a good idea to work out which boundaries are really important to you, such as the ones for your children's safety, and which boundaries are not worth fighting about. With fewer restrictions, your children will appreciate that the boundaries you do set are serious.

8. Comforting

It is important for a family to be there for each other through the hard times, as well as the good times. If there is a family tragedy, or a family member has a problem, pulling together can really help. Your children will need your help at this time, and it is important to be open and communicate with them. They will need reassurance and explanation and will react differently depending on their ages. It can also help to talk to someone impartial.

9. Be flexible

More than anything, children just want to spend time with their parents. It can be lots of fun to make time for an impromptu game or an unscheduled trip to the park, as well as being something that you and your children will remember fondly. It's good to have a routine, but it's not the end of the world if it's interrupted from time to time for spontaneous fun and games. For busy families, it can be useful to schedule in a few hours every now and then for a lazy afternoon together.

10. Spend quality time with your partner

It can be difficult to find time for you and your partner once you have children, but it is important to make time for each other. After all, children learn about relationships

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from their parents. Make sure you communicate with them frequently about all the day to day matters, as well as just things you enjoy talking about. Try to organise time that you can spend with each other, whether it's going out for a meal, or just relaxing in front of the TV together.

What can help your mental health and wellbeing

Consider how to connect with others

Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

Help and support others

Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. Could you message a friend or family member nearby? Are there community groups that you could join to support others locally? Remember it's important to do this in line with guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) to keep yourself and everyone safe. And try to be accepting of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours.

Talk about your worries

It is quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing how you are feeling and the things you are doing to cope with family and friends can help them too. If you don't feel able to do that, there are people you can speak to via [NHS recommended helplines](#) or you could find support groups online to connect with.

Look after your physical wellbeing

Your physical health has a big impact on how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise inside where possible and outside once a day, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.

If you are able to go outside, consider walking or gardening (keeping the recommended 2 metres from others as outlined in the [social distancing guidance](#)). If you are staying at home, you can find free easy [10 minute work outs](#) from Public Health England or other exercise videos to try at home on the [NHS Fitness Studio](#). Sport England also has good tips for keeping active at home.

Look after your sleep

Feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough.

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Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. The [Every Mind Matters sleep page](#) provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.

Try to manage difficult feelings

Many people find the news about coronavirus (COVID-19) concerning. However, some people may experience such intense anxiety that it becomes a problem. Try to focus on the things you can control, including where you get information from and actions to make yourself feel better prepared.

It is okay to acknowledge some things that are outside of your control right now but constant repetitive thoughts about the situation which lead you to feel anxious or overwhelmed are not helpful. The [Every Mind Matters page on anxiety](#) and NHS [mental wellbeing audio guides](#) provide further information on how to manage anxiety.

Manage your media and information intake

24-hour news and constant social media updates can make you more worried. If it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting to a couple of checks a day.

Get the facts

Gather high-quality information that will help you to accurately determine your own or other people's risk of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as [GOV.UK](#), or the [NHS website](#), and fact check information that you get from newsfeeds, social media or from other people.

Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

Think about your new daily routine

Life is changing for us all for a while. Whether you are staying at home or social distancing, you are likely to see some disruption to your normal routine.

Think about how you can adapt and create positive new routines – try to engage in useful activities (such as cleaning, cooking or exercise) or meaningful activities (such as reading or calling a friend). You might find it helpful to write a plan for your day or your week.

Do things you enjoy

When you are anxious, lonely or low you may do things that you usually enjoy less often, or not at all. Focussing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax indoors should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings and can boost your mood.

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If you can't do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, try to think about how you could adapt them, or try something new. There are lots of free tutorials and courses online and people are coming up with innovative online solutions like online pub quizzes and streamed live music concerts.

Set goals

Setting goals and achieving them gives a sense of control and purpose – think about things you want or need to do that you can still do at home. It could be watching a film, reading a book or learning something online.

Keep your mind active

Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.

Take time to relax and focus on the present

This can help with difficult emotions, worries about the future, and can improve wellbeing. Relaxation techniques can also help some people to deal with feelings of anxiety. For useful resources see [Every Mind Matters](#) and [NHS' mindfulness page](#).

If you can, once a day get outside, or bring nature in

Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you can't get outside much you can try to still get these positive effects by spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into the garden if you can.

Remember that [social distancing guidelines](#) enable you to go outside to exercise once a day as long as you keep 2 metres apart from others who are not members of your household group.



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