

# Self-Care Ideas

It is really important for parents, carers, children and young people to take care of themselves. This is especially important in times of stress, worry and uncertainty.

While the coronavirus situation is ongoing, it can be tricky to find the time to schedule in self-care. It can also be tricky to do the things you normally would, particularly if you are self-isolating at home.

This guide is designed to give parents, carers, children and young people some ideas for taking care of themselves.

## Taking care of yourself

Remember that parents/carers can't properly care for their children or teens if they haven't taken care of themselves! Your mental health is a priority, particularly as there may be additional stresses and worries at this time.

With plenty of self-care, your parenting brain will be in a healthier place to be:

- Less reactive and more reflective
- More able to stay calm and grounded and so make better decisions
- Less likely to react to 'false threat alarms' in situations with the child (or the whole situation)
- More able to 'read' your child – more attuned and therefore empathic.

## Tips for keeping your stress and anxiety levels low:

- Recognise your early warnings of stress (these could be behavioural, psychological or physiological).
- Be aware of your partner's approach to stress – it could be different to yours!
- Tune in to your feelings.
- Try to focus on what you can control, rather than the bigger challenges.
- Keep in touch with friends and family members.
- Keep your Gateway appointments in the diary. Ask for more parent support sessions if you need to.
- Keep communicating with the professional network – your child's school, social worker, psychologist etc.

## Self-care ideas:

- Make time for yourself
  - Your children might be at home full-time for the foreseeable future. Schedule time into your day that is dedicated to you.
  - Remind your children to take some time to unwind as well.
- Build some laughter into your day.
  - Watch a funny film, phone an amusing friend or 'be silly' with your children.
- Get some exercise
  - Follow a YouTube tutorial, fitness DVD or go for a run or walk outside
- Maintain a healthy sleep cycle and get enough rest
  - Sleep is essential for helping your mood. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time, and get at least 7 hours sleep a night if you can.
  - Children and teens often need more sleep. Help them get the rest they need – you'll know best!

- Focus on the positive and avoid negative thoughts
  - Avoid too much social media and news coverage to help you stay calm.
  - Your positive behaviour will help your children feel calm and protected too.
- Stay connected with friends and family
  - Use technology to help! Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp all offer video call features.
- Keep boundaries between your work and family time
  - If you are working from home, try to stick to strict boundaries. Close your laptop and put away your equipment when you are finished for the day. Don't be tempted to work through your lunch or break times either.
  - Do the same for your children's at-home schoolwork.
- Eat as healthily as possible
  - You might need to get creative with the ingredients you have available!
- Hug and cuddle with your partner or children
  - Physical touch releases feel-good chemicals in your brain. Remember to hug, hold hands or cuddle with your partner, children or teens.
- Ask for help and talk about your feelings
  - If you find you need to talk about your situation, don't be afraid to ask for help. Phone a trusted friend or family member, or talk to your clinician in your next Gateway session.
  - Encourage your children to talk about their feelings too.
- Keep a close eye on your health and stay up-to-date with the latest information
  - Try to avoid overloading yourself with information about the coronavirus, especially from unverified sources.
  - Keep washing your hands and maintaining a healthy environment for your family.

## Sources and resources:

If you need some practical ideas on what to do for your self-care routine, browse the links provided below.

Some of these websites may seem a bit 'cheesy,' but they have some great ideas for taking time for yourself.

Please note that these are not all related to the coronavirus situation. Follow the latest government guidelines for social distancing and don't put yourself at risk. You might need to get creative with adapting these ideas for yourself or your children.

- <https://www.asthebirdfliesblog.com/posts/free-self-care-ideas>
- <https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2017/06/self-care-activities-for-moms-to-do-with-kids.html>
- <https://www.developgoodhabits.com/self-care-ideas/>
- <https://www.parents.com/kids/health/childrens-mental-health/self-care-checklist-for-kids/>
- <https://www.cratejoy.com/box-insider/self-care-tips-and-activities-for-teens/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/inside-out-outside-in/201912/11-self-care-tips-teens-and-young-adults>