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| St. Austin’s Primary School |

**Ideas for helping children who feel isolated during the Coronavirus**

1. Virtual team-work – find an activity that your child can do alongside their friends e.g. a maths puzzle or English writing activity and set up a video call so that they can do it together virtually. There are lots of ways to do video calls – you could use WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams (if you have Microsoft), Zoom (but make sure there is a password set to avoid “Zoom bombing”), Facetime, Google Hangouts, Skype etc. Make sure to supervise your child whilst they do these calls.
2. As above but for play. Your child could play Minecraft, Lego, bake cookies etc. but do it whilst on a video call to their friends. But remember to supervise your child.
3. Daily diary – your child can write about all the things they miss, whether that be people or activities. They can then write about what they like about those people or activities and write about what they plan to do once they are allowed to go back to them. These help the child to focus on a future goal and remember that there are other people out there that care about them.
4. Write notes to friends – your child can write notes to friends that they will give to them once they see them again. Or perhaps you could drop the notes off and do an exchange with their friend- like a pen pal. A handwritten note feels more personal than a text. Again, this works on the principal of point 2, above.
5. Discuss their feelings – you do not have to try to fix their feelings but acknowledging that they are feeling sad or lonely helps. Explaining that their feelings are normal and that others will feel the same as them also helps.
6. Getting outdoors – a socially distanced walk outside can reset the brain. A few minutes is more than enough to help your child feel relaxed and less anxious.
7. Getting plenty of exercise – besides from a daily walk, if you are stuck for ideas then Joe Wicks has a daily workout which he has been doing since the beginning of lockdown <https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1/videos> If your child doesn’t like the Joe Wicks workouts then there are plenty of other opportunities online such as yoga, dance classes, Zumba etc.
8. Mindfulness – this can be combined with point 6. Ask your child to focus on their senses, what can they see, hear, smell etc whilst on their walk. Perhaps there is a bird tweeting at the top of a tree or a daisy growing on the grass. All this helps to change the child’s mindset and focus on the now.
9. Mindfulness 2 – use apps such as Headspace or Calm (both free) which can be used to meditate and relax
10. Care packages – your child can drop off a “care package” at a friend or families house. Social distancing can still be maintained but your child will feel a sense of wellbeing from doing something nice for somebody else and a sense of connection with another person.
11. Learn a new skill. It’s proven that learning something new helps with mental health and wellbeing. It could be something such as learning a language through apps such as Duolingo or Memrise, or learning to sew etc.
12. Maintain a routine and set achievable goals – loss of routine can be a real challenge for children so keeping a routine, whatever that looks like, is very important. Setting goals also helps your child to feel a sense of achievement every day. It could be a simple goal such as read 10 pages of my favourite book. Write the goal down then tick it off.
13. Tidying up – psychologically, the sense of control that tidying gives helps to combat the loss of control caused by the corona virus. It can be as simple as tidying their own room or the whole house (if you wanted help tidying up parents!)
14. Reading – as good as all the online activities are, they also come with the side-effect of increasing brain activity which won’t help anyone feeling anxious, particularly around bedtime. Reading is an excellent way to move away from the screen but occupy the mind with something which is positive.
15. External help – remember that if things seem to be escalating to a point which worries you then there are many charities which can help such as:
	1. Young Minds - <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
	2. Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
	3. Barnardo’s - <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-families/mental-health>
	4. NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/>
	5. Place 2 Be - <https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/supporting-your-child-s-mental-health/>
	6. CAMHS - <https://www.nwbh.nhs.uk/camhs-st-helens>
16. **Activities which you could do:**

a. Video “While we can’t Hug” about social distancing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PnnFrPaRgY&feature=youtu.be>

b. Read this online book about children who are worried about the coronavirus. It’s a lovely short read suitable for all ages.

<https://en.calameo.com/read/000777721945cfe5bb9cc?authid=Xu9pcOzU3TQx>

c. BBC class clips aimed at different emotions – has lots of sections about worries, mindfulness, sharing etc. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/ks2-pshe/zbrg7nb>

d. Rain Before Rainbows – picture book which could help with discussions about how difficult situations lead to growth and development <http://stayhome.walker.co.uk/rainbows/>

e. Worry book – write down all your worries. When things are written down or spoken out loud they don’t seem to big anymore

f. Celebration book –what opportunities the lockdown has given them which they are thankful for. Have they learnt any new skills? Started a new hobby which they will continue? Etc.

g. Time capsule – can be used in 2 ways. 1 – as a way to seal worries away so that they can no longer affect you. 2. As a snapshot of a moment which will become historical.

h. Relaxation techniques from Save the Children, including “the Lazy Lemon”. Some lovely meditation and relaxation techniques that you can do with the children for 5 mins or longer to help them relax and ward off any anxieties <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/coronavirus/resources/learning-at-home/relaxation-exercises-to-do-at-home-with-your-kids>

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