

# Family life in a 'new' world

While being together is usually great at weekends and holidays, being together all the time without school and leisure activities and regular socializing with friends can be tiring. It can cause irritability and wear and tear between adults and between children. Here are some ideas taken from this web link <https://krisepsykologi.no/what-can-we-say-to-children-about-coronavirus/#facts-corona>

## **1 Establish regular routines in everyday life**

Solid, well-known routines in everyday life provide security and stability. It works well in an uncertain situation. Strive to have communal meals at regular times, carry out bedding routines as usual and keep to the rules children usually have for what they are allowed and not. If greater irritability is experienced, it is a good thing to do something together that is nice.

## **2 Do enjoyable things together**

Involve the kids in coming up with ideas for what you can do the next week. Make a plan and suggest some regular family times where you can play games, play, go for a walk together or do other things that you know most of you like. Think about what catches your children's interest when you are on vacations. Many of the interactive games that exist, adults can join. Here is a chance for adults to learn from children.

## **3 Internet can be very helpful (to those who have access), but it is not a babysitter**

Tablets and cell phones are great to use when there is a lot of free time that is not filled by organized activities. Both playing alone and interaction are engaging and provide good distraction. It is perfectly understandable that children are allowed to spend more time on mobile and tablets than usual. But children also need direct interaction with adults. They develop social competence in interaction with others. Young children in particular need language stimulation through conversations and interaction with adults. Try to find a good balance between direct interaction and play, and children's use of mobile and tablets. Think too about using the Internet or apps to learn a language together, do some physical activity or meditation etc.

## **4 Keep in good contact with family and friends**

Include your children in conversations with grandparents, friends, and other important family members. Use the phone or internet solutions you usually keep in touch through (Facetime, Skype, Messenger etc.). It makes the children feel less alone and emphasizes how important we are to each other. Probably preadolescents and adolescents already meet both close and distant friends through games. Adults can encourage such contact and perhaps stimulate them to make contact with someone in their class or group of friends that they know are lonely or do not have many people they have contact with.

## **5 Discuss how you can stop unnecessary worries**

Worries are natural when the world suddenly changes so much. Children's worry should be addressed by adults, so the kids know they can talk to you about them. But it is easy to worry too much. When the family practice good hand washing, reduce close contact with others, etc., most extra worrying only bring about an upset mind and body. They may need some tools to reduce unnecessary worry. Explain to the children that if they become very worried, it may be good to distract themselves with something that takes their mind off the worries. Teach them to ease their worries. Let them set aside 15-20 minutes in the afternoon where they can think about the worries. If the worrying thoughts come in before or after this time, they can say to themselves without being annoyed at themselves; 'I notice that this worry came into my mind, but I will postpone it to my 'worrytime'.' If they do this every time, the association will become automatic. It is necessary to practice this method, so it is important that they do not give up right away. Adults can benefit as much from this method as children.

## **6 Do not leave radio / TV news on in the background – limit news updates**

Both adults and children will be more worried if they are exposed to constant news about illness, death and other the consequences of the virus. Stay tuned for a few updates every day from trusted sources. It reduces worries and anxiety. Follow some daily news with children. If news made especially for children are available and can be trusted, or pages are written for children in the newspapers, use these. A fixed daily talk time can be good for children.

## **7 Take care of yourself**

The unique situation the world now is in may cause great concern in you as an adult. If you have to stay home and mostly indoors for a long period, it is a tiring situation and it is good for you to find occasional breaks. If you are two parents, you can divide time for being responsible for children, and both have time to relax or do something for yourself. As a single parent do not hesitate to ask others if that is an option. This may be like a long-distance race where you don't know how many laps to run. Then it is important to economize with your energy. If possible, do what has worked well for you during stressful periods in your life. Stressed parents result in stressed children. If the stress level can be kept down, it is good for all parties. At the same time, it is important that one recognizes that it is perfectly normal that when life changes as much as now, it is natural that it is stressful, and it may take time to find new routines that work.

## **8 Ask for help**

There are Facebook and WhatsApp community level groups popping up in Brighton & Hove that may be able to offer emotional and other support. The Brighton & Hove Family Service Directory may also be helpful and includes information about Foodbanks for example <http://www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk/kb5/brighton/fsd/home.page> or or call 01273 293545

**If you have concerns about a child being at risk, you should contact the council's Front Door For Families on 01273 290400.**