



Coping with uncertainty

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COVID-19

- Lots of uncertainty

- *will I become poorly?*
- *will any of my family become poorly?*
- *when will I see Grandma/pa again?*
- *when can I go back to school?*
- *am I doing my schoolwork correctly?*
- *will we have enough food?*
- *.....?*



How is COVID 19 affecting your child?

- Children will be feeling a rollercoaster of emotions
- They may be feeling
 - Anxious or worried
 - Disappointed about missing out on events/activities
 - Frustrated about changes to daily life/routines/activities
 - Angry
 - Helpless
 - Uncertain
 - Confined and isolated
- All of these feelings are completely understandable



How is COVID 19 affecting you?

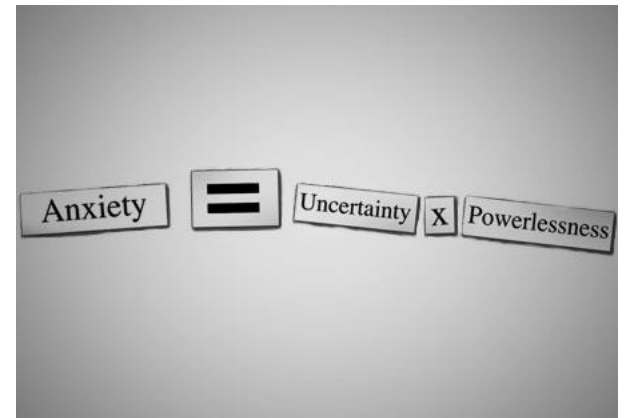
- Lots of things changed very abruptly
- We have had very little time to plan and to prepare our children
- The situation so novel we may doubt the usefulness of our usual strategies
- We may have our own worries and anxieties (health, loved ones, finances, employment)
- All of these feelings are completely understandable
- It can be hard to remain calm and reassuring at these times

Uncertainty and its impact



- When we are **uncertain**
 - we have **less knowledge** than we would like to have,
 - nothing appears to be clear-cut,
 - and it is often **difficult to predict** what exactly will happen next.
- We **can all experience** difficulty with uncertainty.
- Autistic people tell us they often find it particularly difficult to cope with **uncertainty** in their lives.

Uncertainty & anxiety



- **Uncertainty** can be **stressful** and **upsetting**,
- not knowing what is going to happen can feel very **negative**
- Some people try to **avoid uncertainty** at all cost.
- Research indicates that **difficulties coping with uncertainty** can lead to **anxiety**.

Supporting children in uncertain times

Listening and Communicating

- Listen and validate concerns
- Work together to find a way to express worries and to ask questions
- Develop a shared vocabulary for the situation and the feelings it provokes
- Use art, picture collages, toys etc. to talk about concerns



Supporting children in uncertain times

Be Factual and Develop Strategies

- Use social stories/comic strip stories to explain the current situation and build in examples of positive coping



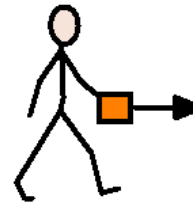
Imagine



a stop sign for your



worries



Take

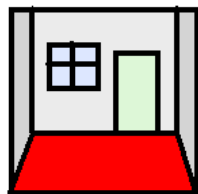


a breath

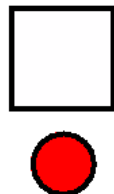


Feel

the



floor



under

your



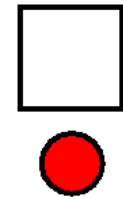
feet,

or

the



chair



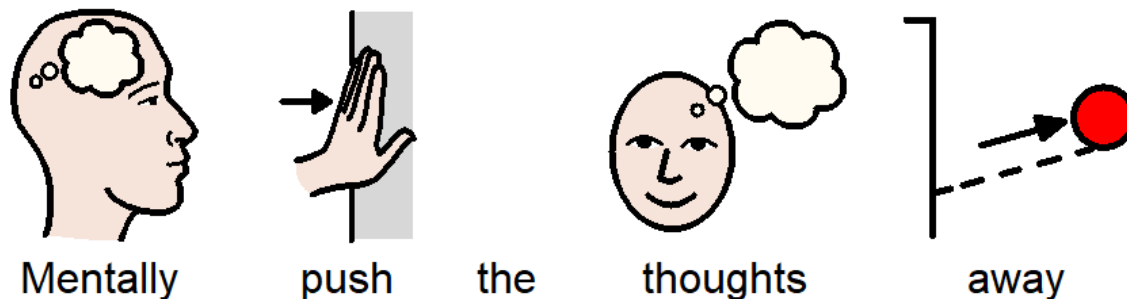
under

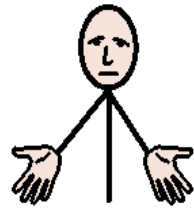
you

Supporting children in uncertain times

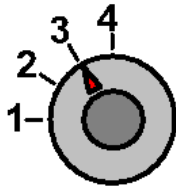
Limit Information seeking

- Discourage constant information seeking about COVID-19 (and model this!)
- Introduce strategies to get rid of sticky thoughts





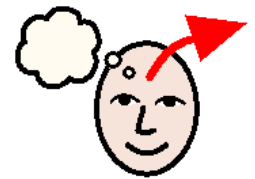
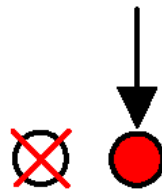
If you need to check the news ,



set a time and limit how long



1

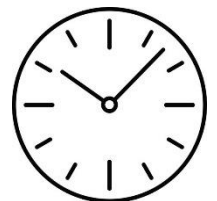


Do one of the other activities to focus your mind

Supporting children in uncertain times

Allocate time to listen and talk

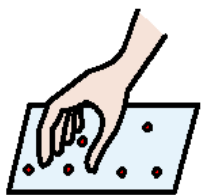
- Try to limit the number of assurance seeking questions you answer (this is hard!)
- Maybe have an allocated 'worry time' each day?
- Maybe have a 'worry box' to put the worries in and together look at it at the specified time
- This way your child will know when their worries will be addressed and this will be containing



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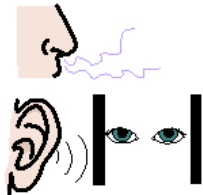
Provide Structure

- Draw up a schedule for the day
- Use visual structure or calendars, whiteboards, apps.....
- Encourage interests, hobbies and skills
 - They provide enjoyment, are comforting, containing and soothing.

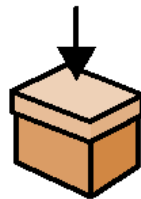


Choose

a



Sensory



object

to



focus on

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when



you



feel anxious

Supporting children in uncertain times

Think Positive!

- Find positives where you can, use mood lifting strategies
- Plan for future events
- Distract with useful & enjoyable activities
- Try to maintain as much normal routine as possible

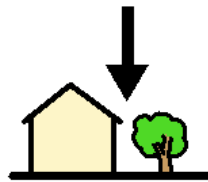


Imagine



your

happy



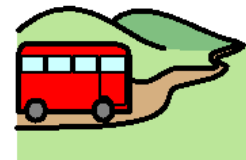
place,

go for a

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virtual

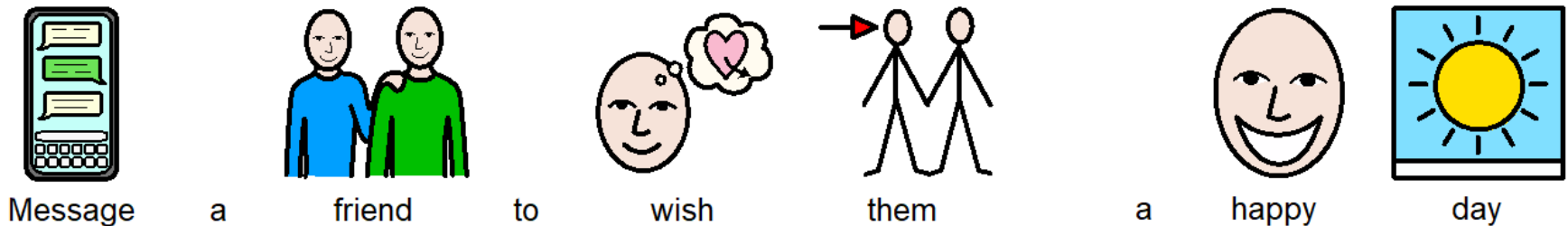


trip

Supporting children in uncertain times

Encourage Social Connectedness

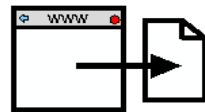
- Encourage (remote/virtual) contact with friends and family (but remember you may need to limit social media)



Supporting children in uncertain times

Relax and recharge

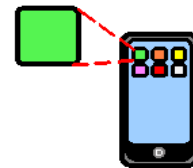
- Build in 'recharge' time each day
- Practice relaxation techniques
 - Create a playlist of calming or happy songs
 - Create a watch list of favourite films and schedule movie time
 - Get some exercise
 - Download a mindfulness app or check out you tube



Download



a mindfulness



app

Looking after yourself too

- Reflect, relax and accept.....
- This is a really unusual situation
- Your usual practices won't apply and may need to be relaxed a little
- Don't be too hard on yourself about
 - sticking to your usual rules (screen time etc...)
 - being the perfect substitute teacher!
 - managing home schooling AND home working
- You may not meet your own expectations, that's OK
- You can only do your best

Stay Safe
and
Take Care