

# Advice for Parents & Carers Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing

This is an unsettling and fast changing situation which may be confusing to children and young people.

It is likely that some children and young people may experience greater feelings of anxiety at this time, particularly related to concerns about:

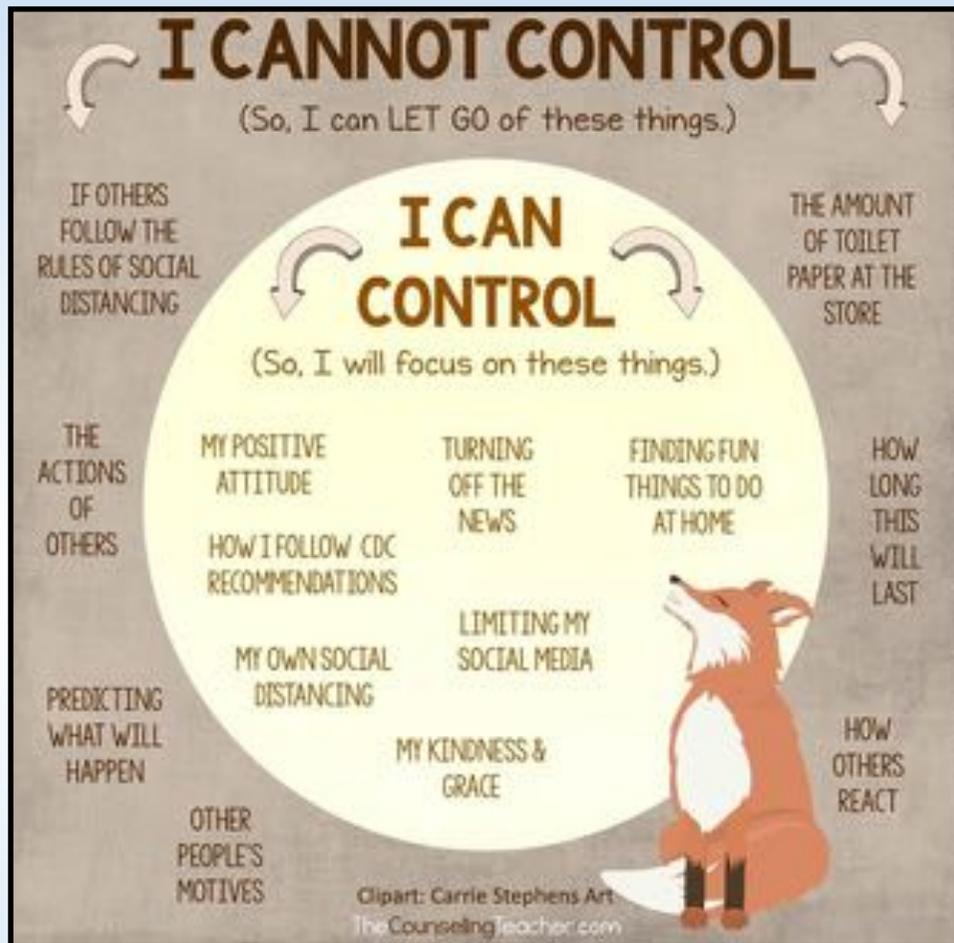
- ⇒ The virus and risks to the health of themselves and others.
- ⇒ Change and uncertainty.
- ⇒ Loss of social opportunities.
- ⇒ Missed learning and transitions (e.g. exams and moving from school to college).

## Key Messages:

- ◆ Remember it is ok (and normal) for children and young people to feel anxious and want lots of reassurance at the moment.
- ◆ Try and understand any specific anxieties/worries through listening and talking. There are also online resources that your child may find helpful in understanding and managing their worries:
  - \* [The Healthy Young Minds website](#) links to apps and websites supporting children and young people to manage feelings of anxiety
  - \* [The Anna Freud Centre](#) has a page on strategies with young people themselves have found useful when feeling anxious
  - \* [BBC Bitesize](#) have a web-page dedicated to mental health and online 'wellbeing lessons'
- ◆ Manage the information that is available to your child (e.g. reduce access to news channels and social media).
- ◆ Keep a routine and provide structure to the day (but retain flexibility and be realistic about what is achievable).
- ◆ Keep your child busy and active with a wide range of activities (including physical activity).
- ◆ Help them to stay connected to friends and family (such as video calling and writing letters).
- ◆ Consider relaxation activities; the following links and resources may be helpful:
  - \* [Bedtime stories and mindfulness and relaxation audio stories](#) for children of all ages:
  - \* [Yoga and mindfulness videos:](#)
  - \* [Mindfulness app for children and young people and adults:](#)
  - \* [Mindfulness colouring:](#)
  - \* [Mindfulness games cards:](#)
- ◆ Talk about the things we can and cannot control at the moment and make sure they are able to control some elements of their day (Please see the circle of control over the page).

If you would like further information about supporting your child while schools are closed, you can find a [more detailed advice booklet here](#)

## Circle of Control

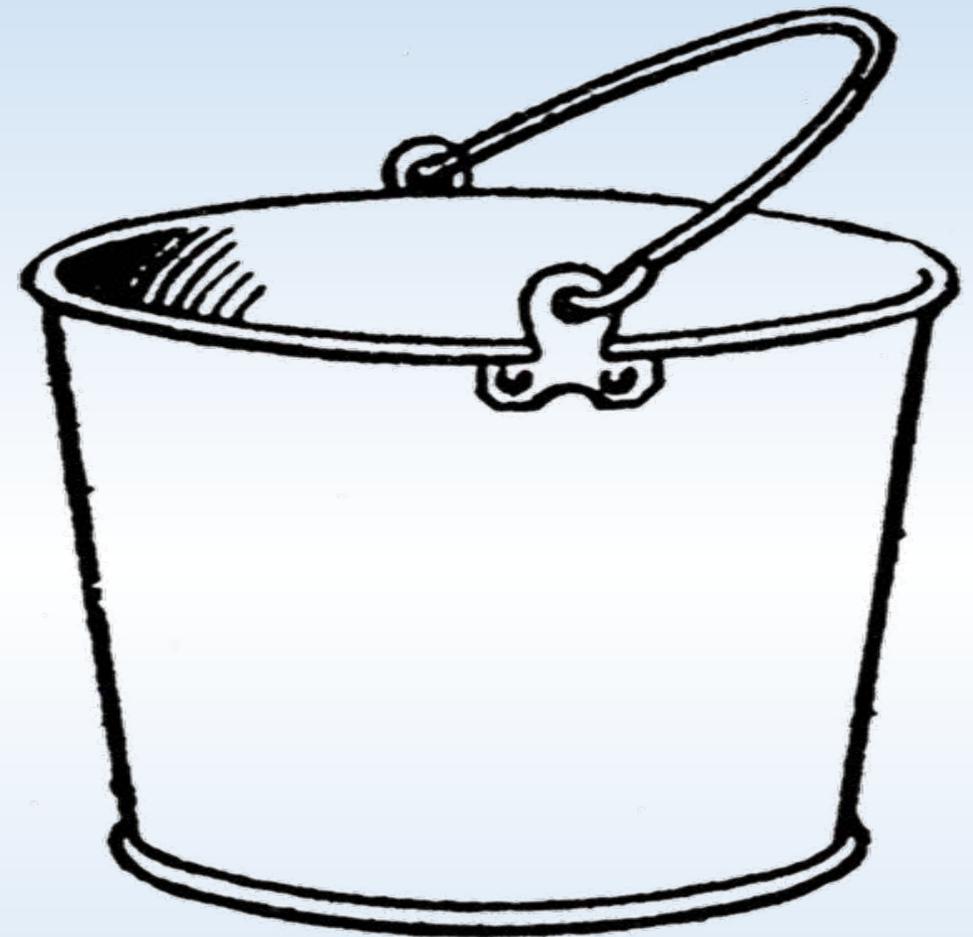


This is a useful model for adults and children alike. We all need to feel in control of some aspects of our days, especially when so much feels beyond our control.

**What options can you give children so they feel in control?**

**Where can you exercise your own choices?**

## Stress Bucket



**What's in your stress bucket?**

Acknowledge what is in your stress bucket, and think about what 'taps' or coping strategies you can still use to prevent it overflowing?

Again this can be useful for adults and children, and can be linked to circles of control as not all stressors can be removed.

# Reframing Unhelpful Thoughts

We can help ourselves to feel better by trying to change the way we think. Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are connected, and getting stuck in a pattern of unhelpful thoughts can impact negatively on our feelings and behaviours. 'Reframing' is the process of changing our unhelpful thoughts to improve well-being.

[This video](#) produced by the NHS Every Mind Matters campaign provides a helpful introduction.

In order to reframe an unhelpful thought, we need to **Catch it, Check it, Change it.**

**Catch it** Try to spot when you have a thought that isn't helpful.

**Check it** Stop and think about the thought. Is it true? Does it catastrophise the situation? What might other people think about the same situation?

**Change it** Try to substitute the thought for one that is more realistic, positive and/or hopeful.

With practice this does get easier and can have a significant impact on promoting more positive feelings and behaviour.

To get started we have provided some examples for parents, teachers and children below.



# Be Kind - Children & Young People

Catch it	Check it	Change it
I don't want to go back to school, I like being off school	Everyone has to go to school	I used to enjoy school and seeing my friends, and I have the holidays to look forward to
I'm really worried that I have not done all my work at home – I didn't understand it	I have tried to do the work that I can, and I have done lots of other things	My teachers have always helped me with my work, they will help me again
I'm anxious about going back to school, everything will be different	School will be new and different for everybody	I'm looking forward to seeing my friends and teachers again, they will tell me the different things I need to do
I don't want to go back to school and get the virus	People are working hard to ensure the virus does not spread	There are guidelines to help keep everybody safe, school will follow the guidelines. The Drs and nurses are very good at looking after people who are ill
I'm worried I've forgotten everything, and my teacher will tell me off	I've been doing some work	Everyone has been off school, teachers will help me and everyone else to remember what we learned before
I'm worried I won't have any friends, or that my friends have forgotten about me	I have not forgotten about my friends, so they won't have forgotten about me	Everyone has been away from their friends, we will all be looking forward to seeing each other again
I'm worried about my parents/siblings/grandparents in case they get the virus	People are working hard to ensure the virus does not spread	There are guidelines to help keep everybody safe, school will follow the guidelines. The Drs and nurses are very good at looking after people who are ill



## Be Kind - Staff

Catch it	Check it	Change it
I feel guilty that I've been at home while other staff are in school with the children	Advice tells everyone what to do to keep safe	I'm doing the right thing, keeping myself and others safe. I'm still working, just in a different way
I don't know why X can't come in, there's only a few of us in school doing all the work, it's not fair	Advice tells everyone what to do to keep safe	It's tough for everyone at the moment. Everyone is doing what they can in the situation.
I've found it really difficult at home, I've got my own children to look after as well as trying to work a full day	I'm trying to do two full time jobs (or more) at the same time	It's not possible to do everything, I'll try to concentrate on doing a few things well
I'm worried I'll be asked to do a different role, and I might not be able to do it	Things may change when I go back, I'm sure we will all be told in advance	I know everyone will be supporting each other when we go back, it will be the 'new normal'
I'm really worried about going back to school, I don't want to get this virus/ pass it on to someone at home	Advice tells everyone what to do to keep safe	Things will be in place to keep people safe. Risk assessments will be done. There are people I can talk to if I need to
I'm really anxious about going back to school, I feel I've lost all my confidence, and everything will be different	I often feel like this, especially after the summer holiday	I've done this before, and I know what to do to make it work. I have colleagues I can depend on for support
What will happen to my class if I'm ill? It will mean more change for them	People get ill all the time, it won't be my fault	If I'm ill there are other people who know the children well and can support them
So many parents have not done any work with their children – this will reflect on my progress and it's not my fault	Education has changed for everyone	There will be a whole school approach to welcoming the children back to school and settling them in. They may have learned lots of different things we can share together.



# Be Kind - Parents

Catch it	Check it	Change it
I've worked very hard but I don't think my child's learned very much, Teachers will think I'm a bad parent	Why would they think that, I've done my best	I'm a good parent but I'm not a teacher
I feel guilty but I can't wait for the children to be back at school	It's been hard work trying to juggle everything with the lock down	It's good for the children to go to school, and it gives me a chance to do other things
If other parents have not done the home learning will it keep my child back while they catch up?	Children are always at different stages in their learning	The teachers will understand and ensure all children have the best education
I'm worried about my child going back to school and getting the virus, I might keep them off school	I'll check the facts about how people catch the virus especially children	I'm worried about my children catching the virus but I understand that school will be as safe as possible,
I don't think I'll be able to manage if the children are in school at different times	I'll wait and see what happens	I'm sure I can manage, and other people will be understanding
The teachers have just had another extended holiday. They never do any work	Many of the teachers have been working very hard during the lock down	The teachers are probably worried about keeping the children and themselves safe
I really liked the children being at home, I wish it would continue	But their education and going to school is important	I really like the children being at home but I know they enjoy seeing their friends and learning in school



I really like the children being at home, I wish it could continue.

I am a parent, not a teacher, school will understand I've done my best.

Teachers will think I'm a bad parent.

I feel guilty but I can't wait for the children to be back at school

I've worked very hard but I don't think my child's learned very much

This is a difficult time for everyone; going back to school will be positive for my child's and my wellbeing

Parents,  
Be kind to  
yourself

Children are looking forward to going back to school, everyone understands things may be different

I'm worried about my child going back to school and getting the virus.

I don't think I'll be able to manage if the children are in school at different times.