

# Wellbeing Letter

Spring 2020

## *What's Included?*

- Looking after yourself, looking after your children.
- Coronavirus: supporting children's wellbeing.
- Useful links and where to look for information
- How to deal with Coronavirus anxiety.
- Lots of ideas for self isolation to keep everyone active!

## *Welcome!*

Welcome this special edition SEND Wellbeing Letter.

Infectious disease outbreaks, like the current Coronavirus (Covid19) can be scary and can affect our mental health. While its important to stay informed, there are many things that we can do to support and manage our own and our children's wellbeing during such times.

In this letter you will find information, tips and links that will help you, your family and your friends to look after your mental health



## Looking after yourself, looking after your children

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete.

Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for people. Having children and young people at home, often when people are trying to work themselves, adds another layer of stress. It is therefore important to not only consider our physical health during such challenging times, but also to pay attention to our mental health. It is normal to feel worried, stressed and anxious when we are faced with uncertain situations, but the sooner we acknowledge and learn to take care of our mental health, the healthier and better equipped we'll be to cope with the situation we're having to face.

### Looking after yourself

Taking care of our mental health and checking in on others is something that we can all do, and we need to remember that by looking after our own mental health, we'll be best placed to look after our children. Remember when they tell you on aeroplanes that you need to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others, it's like that.

Time is precious, especially when looking after children. However, try to plan your days or weeks to include something from each of the '5 ways to wellbeing' (developed by NEF)

#### BE ACTIVE

Try to make sure that you and your family get regular exercise every day. You Tube has lots of exercise videos for kids and adults. Get children involved in planning their own 'indoor PE'.

If current government advice permits, try to get outside once a day either into your garden if you have one or in a place where there are few people. If you can't go out, open the windows for some fresh air and take some time to look at the world outside.

## Looking after yourself, looking after your children

### TAKE NOTICE

Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what's happening in the here and now in your family. Notice and appreciate the small things. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing. There's lots of good mindfulness apps to try, but if that's not for you, just getting into something you enjoy e.g. cooking, drawing etc. and really focussing on it can be just as good.

### CONNECT

Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Social distancing is going to make that trickier, but we're lucky enough to have technology to help us out. Think physical distancing, but social connections. Social media is great, but if you can, try to have phone calls or even video calls. Arrange to FaceTime/Skype a friend for coffee, phone relatives more often than usual. Whilst it can be helpful to share worries, try to find other things to talk about too.

### GIVE

Research tells us that giving back to our community helps people to feel valuable and makes us happier. We might not be able to contribute to our community in our usual way, but many people will still be able to find ways to give back. Lots of community groups are setting up schemes that aim to help vulnerable people at this difficult time. If you want to get involved, check out local social media for ideas.

### KEEP LEARNING

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement. Whilst we're busy learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts and worries. Social-distancing will bring new challenges, but it will give many of us the time to start a new hobby or learn about an area that we've always been interested in.

## Coronavirus: Supporting Children's Wellbeing

### Wellbeing tips for families:

- Talk to your children, and answer their questions. Ask about what they have heard about the virus and the situation so that you can correct possible misconceptions and reassure them.
- Avoid being too immersed in media coverage. Be mindful of the amount of things you are reading and watching, including social media – as this may add to worry and anxiety. Consider a few updates every day from trusted sources.
- Remember that people react differently to significant events. Some people – adults and children – may feel worried, some excited, some nothing much at all. Be reassured that different reactions are normal and ok.
- If your child seems worried, it may be good to distract themselves with something that takes their mind off their worries. You might also want to set aside 10-15 minutes each day for them to talk about any worries, and to reassure them.
- Remember to keep things positive and give children hope. For example, tell children that now many people are working to make this better and that even though it is serious, everyone is doing their best to help people.
- Try to keep familiar routines. Well-known routines in everyday life provide security and stability.
- Do nice things together, and keep active. Make a plan and suggest some regular family times where you can play games, do some exercise together, or do other things that you know most of you like. Try to find a good balance between time together, and screen time.
- Keep in good contact with family and friends (via FaceTime, Skype WhatsApp etc.; following NHS guidance on 'social contact'). This will help children connect with others and know that others are thinking about them. It will also reassure them that others are well.
- As a parent you may be concerned yourself. Take care of yourself and make sure you have breaks, time to relax, and ask for help from others if you need.

## Some useful links...

### **NHS advice:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

### ***Talking to children about Coronavirus:***

Advice on talking to children about Coronavirus, by British Psychological Society:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Talking%20to%20children%20about%20Coronavirus.pdf>

How to talk to your child about coronavirus, by Unicef:

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

Child-friendly explanation of Coronavirus for Primary age students:

[https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685\\_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf](https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf)

Information video on Coronavirus for Primary age children (KS2), by Brainpop:

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

Information video on Coronavirus for older children/adults, by WHO:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOV1aBVYKGA&feature=youtu.be>

### ***Looking after your wellbeing***

Coronavirus and your wellbeing, by Mind UK:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

5 ways to wellbeing, by Mindkit:

<https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

**Information on SEND in Telford & Wrekin**

[www.telfordsend.org.uk](http://www.telfordsend.org.uk)

## Some more useful links...

**Mencap** - Easy Read guide to Coronavirus <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Information%20about%20Coronavirus%20ER%20SS2.pdf> also the attached for ALD

<https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/easy-read-advice-on-the-coronavirus-v1.pdf>

**Young Minds** - Talking to your child about Coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

**Carers UK** - Guidance for carers: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

**Covibook** – an interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing during the pandemic: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

**Amaze** - information pack for parents <https://amazesussex.org.uk/faqs-about-the-coronavirus-for-parent-carers-of-children-with-send-brighton-hove/> really like this link within the site: <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/calming-coronavirus-anxiety-children-everyone-else/>

**Public Health England** have produced an easy read version of their [Advice on the coronavirus for places of education](#). You can download it [here](#).

## How to cope with Coronavirus anxiety

As the coronavirus spreads, more and more people are becoming anxious about what it might mean for themselves and their loved ones. It's completely understandable (and normal!) to feel anxious about this emerging health crisis. As part of efforts to take best care of body and mind, here are some tips that might help in tolerating these uncertain times.



When stressed, our brains want us to be able to predict and consider the worst case scenarios to help us prepare and protect ourselves. This is great when there is a way of problem solving the situation – not so great when there isn't. Our brains are predisposed to focus on threat. We will forget the “everyday” and bring full attention to things which are scary, without taking time to really think about the facts.

For example, we might think nothing of getting in our cars everyday but be scared of spiders, even though the evidence suggests we are more likely to be at risk in a car than from a spider.

Furthermore, as a species we are not very good at tolerating uncertainty, something that in the current climate we might need to allow! Our minds want us to have explanations so when we can't find them our brains will fill in the gaps, and if anxiety has any say these explanations will be usually based on our biggest fears.

Anxiety can snowball; we start with one worry and before we know where we are it's grown and grown and we're now headed for a full on catastrophe (the “what if”.. “but then what if...” scenario), even when the likelihood of each possible thing coming true may be minimal.

Anxious thoughts get in the way of our minds taking in what we need to know and deciphering fact from fiction.

The uncertainty of the coronavirus is scary. And scary gets our attention! However, it might help to try to stay grounded and get the facts instead of allowing our minds to make up the information for us. Try to find a source of information which is reliable. Snippets of information from social media may represent one person's worry thoughts, rather than the actual risk/facts. Make sure you are informed but not overloaded – consider limiting your exposure to information. For example, by restricting where you go to find information to reputable sources (such as the NHS, Government sites, World Health Organisation), or by setting boundaries around how much time you will allow yourself to read/listen to the news.





## How to cope with Coronavirus anxiety continued

Now we know thoughts can be catastrophic, uncontained, and can snowball, when you notice your mind back on the topic of coronavirus try to step back. Labelling thoughts as thoughts can help, for example instead of “I have coronavirus and I could die”, try to rephrase this “I recognise I am having the thought that I have coronavirus and I could die”. Emphasising the difference between what is reality and what is a thought can help gain perspective. We can't stop ourselves from worrying (the example that if you are asked not to think about a penguin on ice skates, let's notice where your mind goes!), but we can train our brains to focus on something else. Make time for worry, but also put in boundaries with how much mental space you will allow coronavirus to take. Think about what is in your control and what is not. Worrying about coronavirus will not guarantee a better outcome, so to help you in the moment schedule some coronavirus free time where you can put your attention onto something else.



Take steps to minimise coronavirus related risk. The advice that resonated for me was to assume you are a carrier and to put reasonable and appropriate precautions in place to prevent the risk to others. Act in a way which could minimise the risk of infection to others, rather than acting from a place of avoidance or fear of contamination yourself.

Coronaviruses are spread through everyday contact, through touch, a cough, or a sneeze. If you're sick, stay home. If you're not sick, stay away from close contact with a person who is and engage in healthy habits when it comes to cleanliness. Listen to the advice from the medical professionals around how to practice good self-care and reduce risk of infection.



Stay connected. We are always much better at offering advice and reassurance when it's someone else going through a tricky time – remember our loved ones can do the same for us! They could provide a space to have your thoughts and feelings normalised and offer you some distraction or reassurance. Particularly as more and more of us are opting to self-isolate, remaining in contact with others will be even more important. You might need to get creative! Think about substitutes for face-to-face contact if you believe yourself to be a risk. If you are not able to speak with your friends or family, think about how to connect with those further afield. Suggestions could include writing a letter to a distant loved one, finding a new online group for your local community, or finding an online forum about a hobby or interest that you have.



## How to cope with Coronavirus anxiety continued

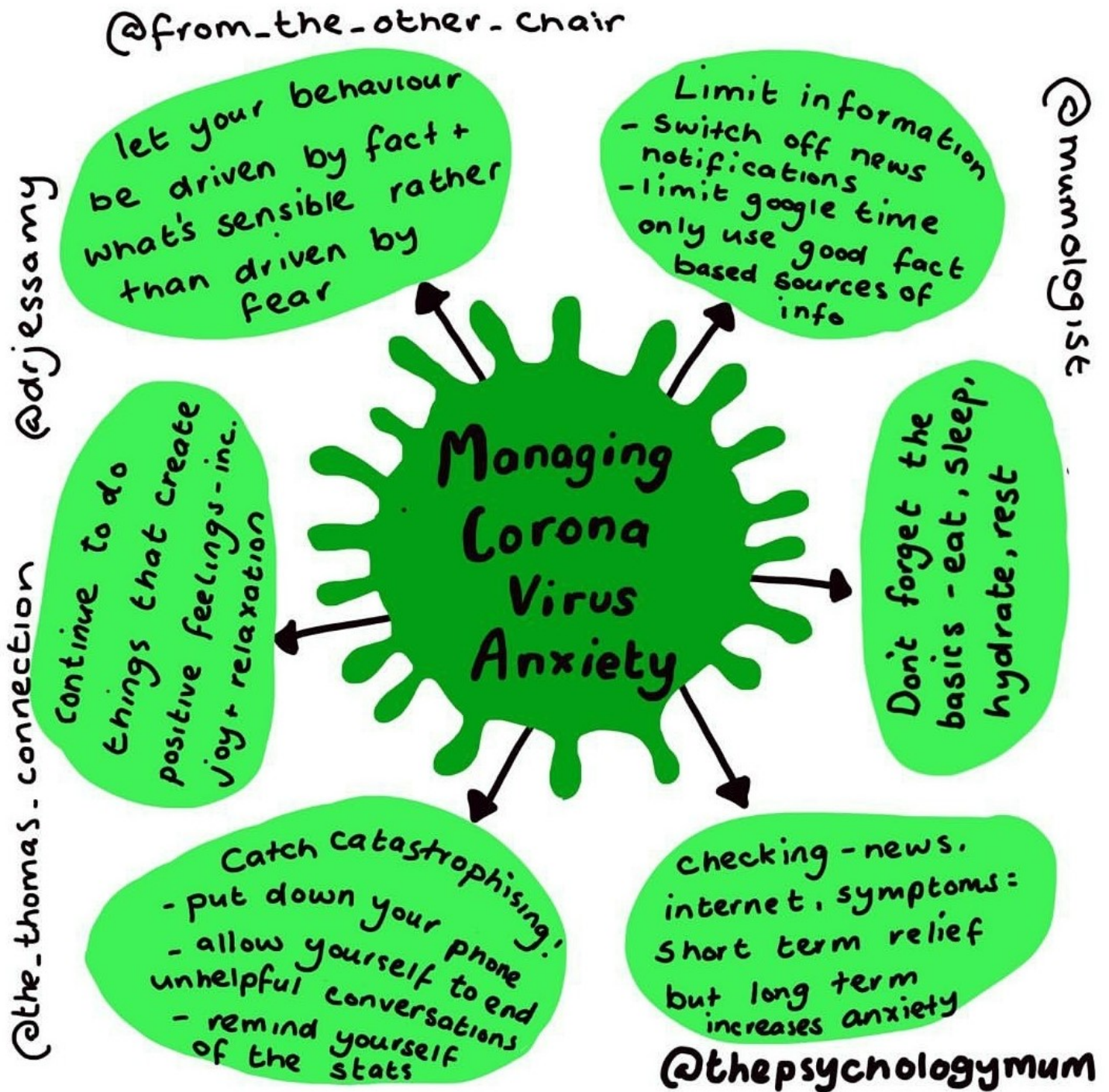
Use your past coping skills. Think about what has helped you in the past when you have felt stressed or overwhelmed. It could be yoga, relaxation, mindfulness, trying a new recipe, talking with a friend, distracting yourself with a puzzle, making time for self-soothing (taking a nice bath for example)... the list is endless! What helps will be different from person to person – use what works for you.



Consider the 5 steps to mental wellbeing. The more you nurture your mental health, the more resilient to anxiety and stress you will enable yourself to be. Strategies for mental wellbeing include: staying connected with other people; be physically active; learn new skills; give to others; pay attention to the present moment. You might need to adapt some of these if you are self-isolating or unable to participate with your usual activities. Some ideas include: trying a new exercise regime at home; making time for a long phone call to a friend; finding a new hobby; practising a mindfulness exercise. There are some great resources online that can help with activities during periods of self-isolation, why not try [www.dothinkshare.com](http://www.dothinkshare.com) or check out our list of self-isolation activities.



Information from the media is changing day by day. This can make times feel uncertain and the future unpredictable. Thinking too far ahead can feed those “what if..” thoughts. Breaking your day into chunks could help you to step back. Instead of thinking about the whole day, think about the “now and next”. What are you doing in this moment, and what do you plan to do in the next. Think in terms of the present and immediate future. You’ll deal with anything that comes up as you need to, but contemplating something that hasn’t happened yet can be a playground for anxious thoughts.



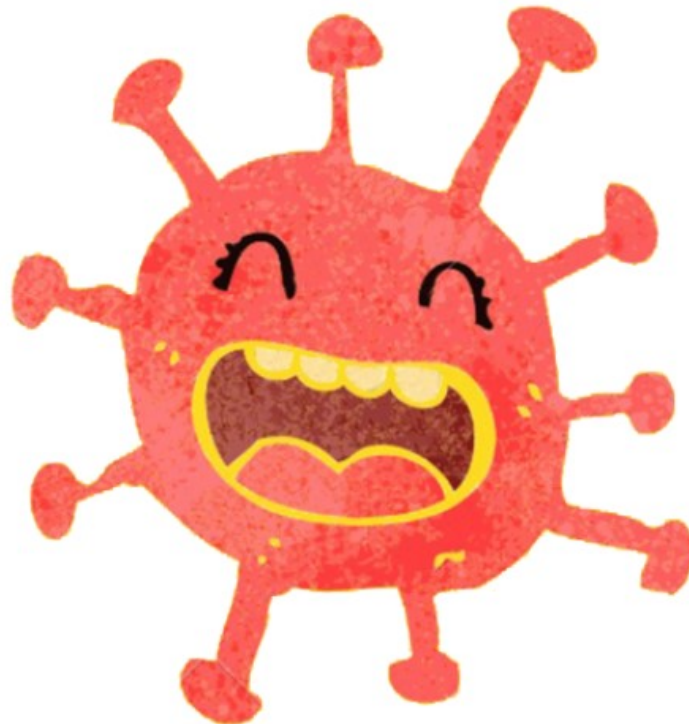
## Lots of ideas for self isolation to keep everyone active!

- Clear out your wardrobe or cupboards
- Give yourself a manicure/pedicure
- Read/write a book
- Do a crossword/Sudoku/word search/colouring in
- Binge watch a must-see boxset/film series or old feel good movie
- Make a photo album of phone photos websites/apps like Snapfish and Freeprint will send you up to 50 photos for free (you just pay for postage)
- Gardening- mow the lawn, plant some flowers
- Start a blog
- Have a go at Baking
- Learn a new recipe
- Learn how to knit/crochet
- Have a dance
- Exercise try home workouts, YouTube videos (Bodycoach TV), yoga
- Make a travel bucket list
- Learn a language- websites/apps like Duolingo and Babbel offer some languages for free
- Do some DIY- redecorate a room.
- Call a friend or family member- video calls (Skype, Whatsapp, Facetime)
- Play a game- card games, board games, computer games or design your own!
- Learn to play an instrument
- [Bird watch, create a bird feeder](#)
- Make jams or preserve
- Have a home picnic
- Learn to give yourself/someone else a massage
- Have a digital detox- clear you email inbox, delete old files, update your passwords
- Sort through paperwork
- Research a topic of interest
- Do a jigsaw puzzle
- Sort through photos on your phone
- Learn a magic trick
- Listen to a podcast, radio show or audiobook- websites/apps like [www.digitalbook.io](http://www.digitalbook.io) and <https://librivox.org> have free public domain audio books
- [Arts and crafts](#)
- Enter a competition
- [Create a home spa- bubble bath, face masks, foot spa](#)
- Listen to music
- Sign up to a free online class/course- try places like [www.reed.co.uk/courses/free](http://www.reed.co.uk/courses/free) and <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses>
- Create a time capsule
- Design a magazine or newspaper
- Online shopping
- Spending time with pets- teach them a new trick?
- [Try a science experiment](#)
- Look through old photographs/home movies
- Write a letter to a family member/friend that you can send once your well
- [Take a virtual tour of a museum](#)
- Find things to donate to charity (once it's safe to visit!)
- Create your own cinema- make tickets, popcorn, lay down a rug.



# HELLO!

**I am a VIRUS,  
cousins with the Flu and  
the Common Cold**



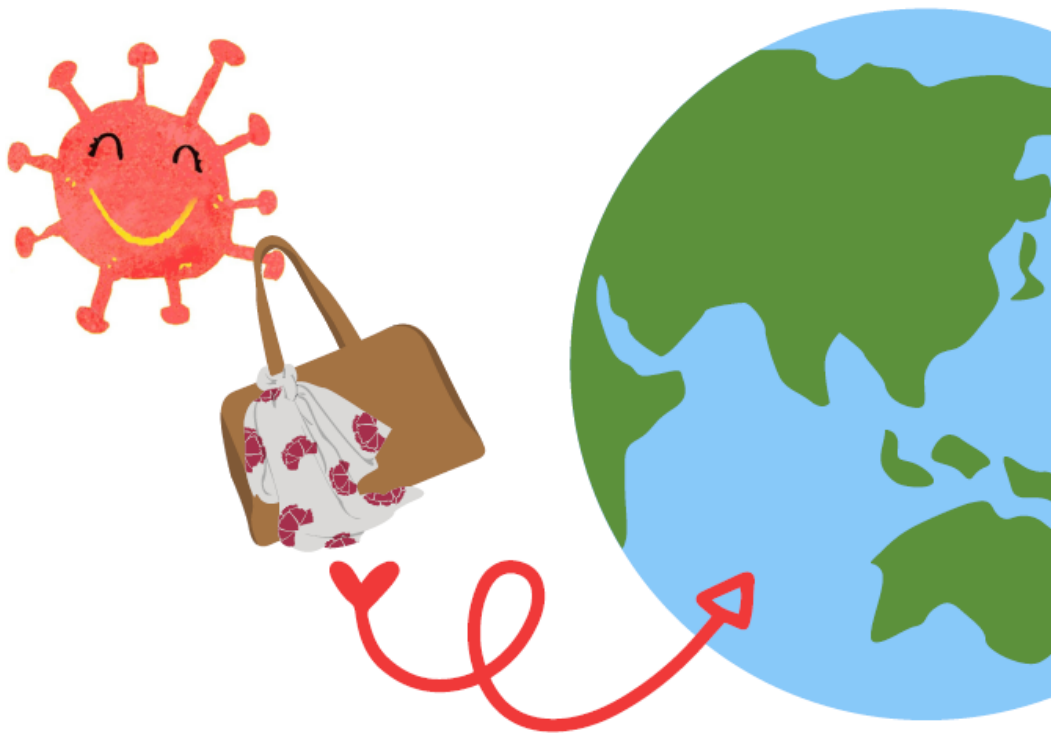
## My name is Coronavirus

MANUELA MOLINA - @MINDHEART.KIDS

[WWW.MINDHEART.CO](http://WWW.MINDHEART.CO)

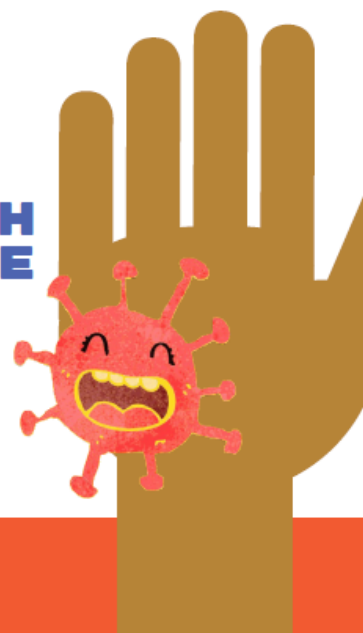
CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 INTERNACIONAL PUBLIC LICENSE

## I love to travel...




and to jump  
from hand to  
hand to say Hi

**HIGH  
FIVE**



## Have you heard about me?

YES



NO

### And how do you feel when you hear my name?



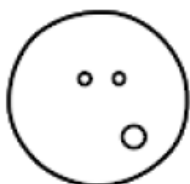
Relaxed



Confused



Worried



Curious



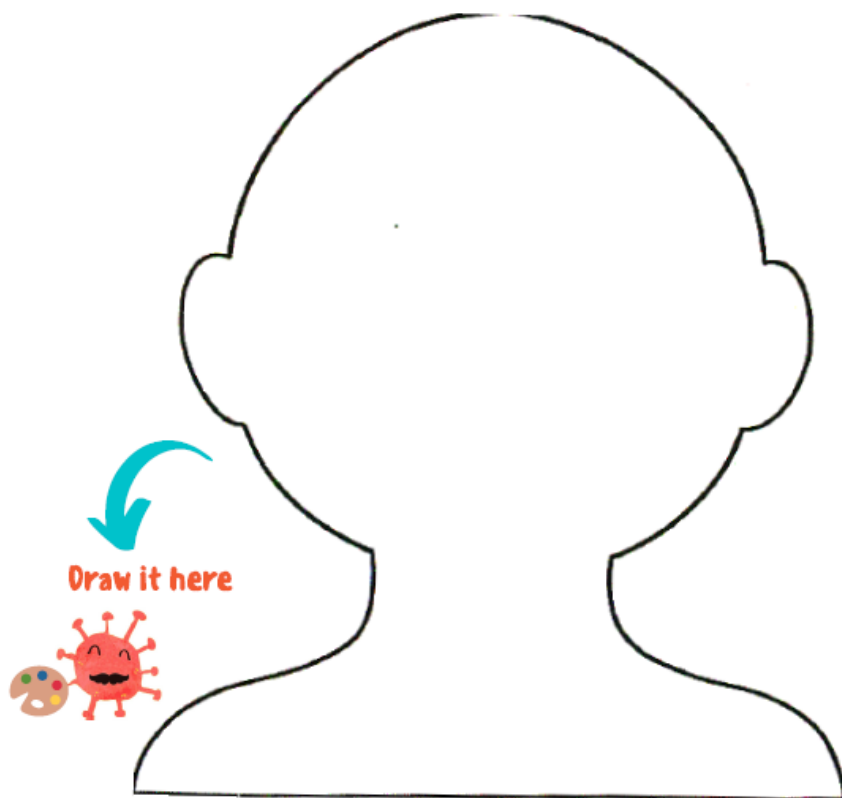
Nervous



Sad



## I can understand you feel...

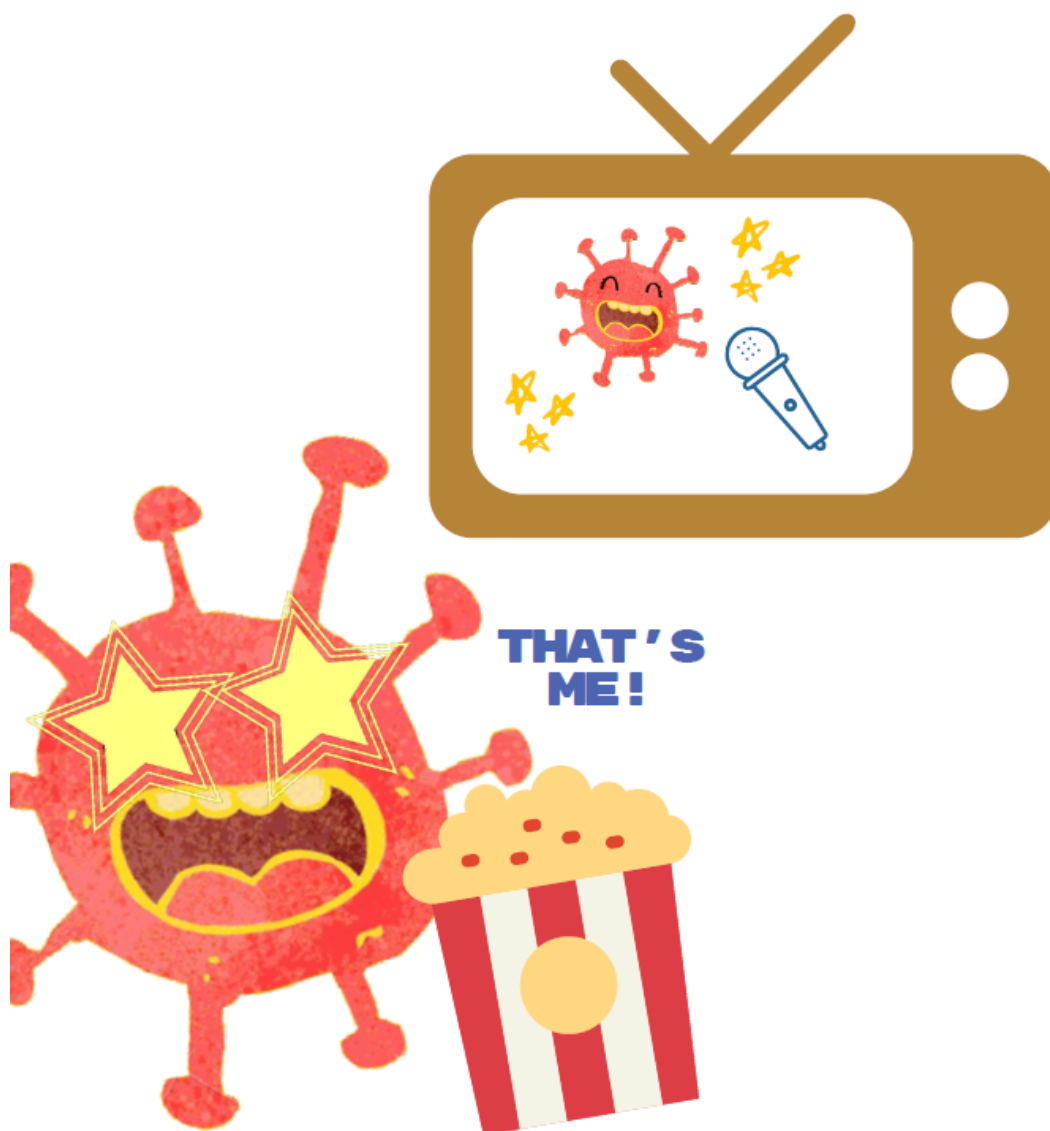


## ...I would feel the same way

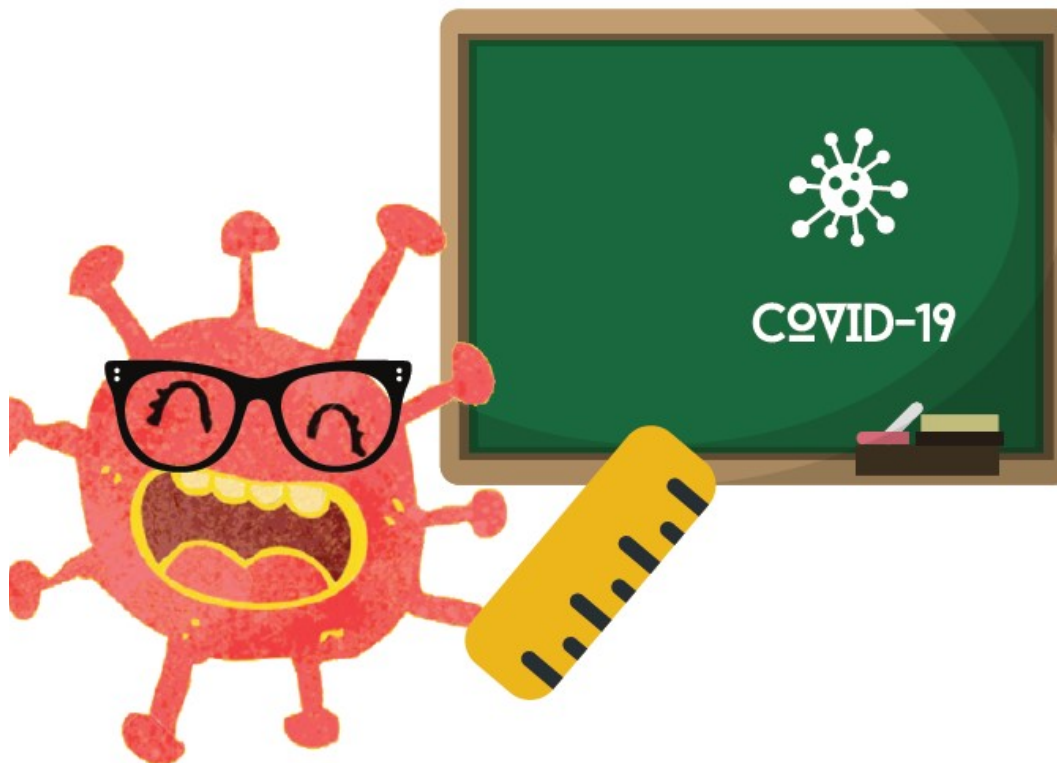




## Sometimes adults get worried when they read the news or see me on TV



## But I am going to explain myself...



## So you can understand...



## When I come to visit, I bring...



### Difficulty breathing



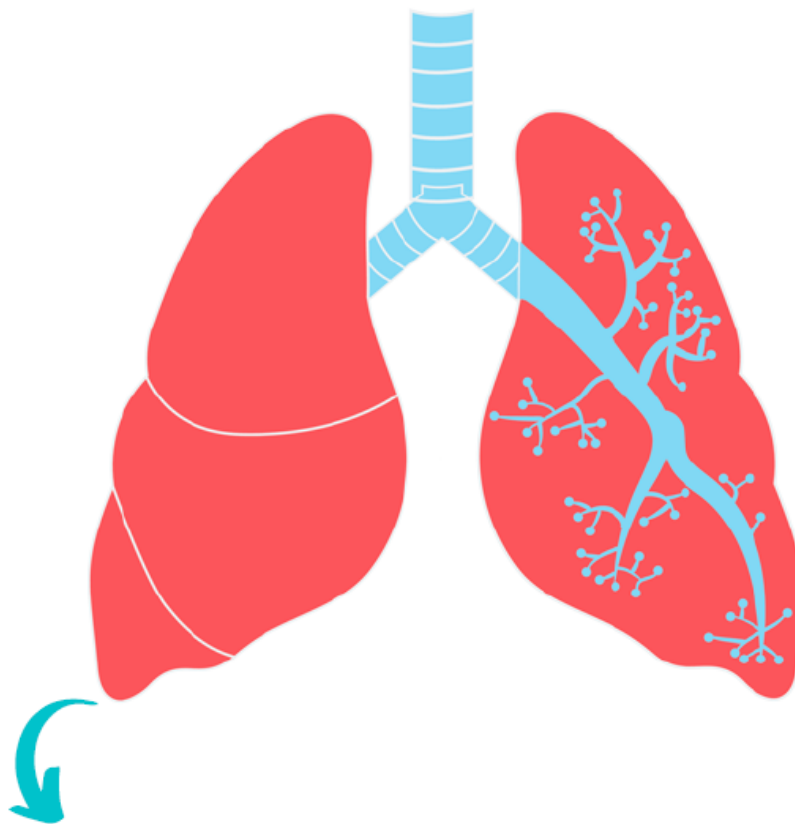
**Fever**



**Cough**



**But I don't stay with  
people for long, and almost  
everyone gets better**



**Just like when you get a  
scrape on you  
knee and it heals**

**BYE BYE...**



**Dont you worry!**

**The adults who take care of you:**

---

**will keep you safe**



## And you can help...

1



**By washing your hands  
with soap and water  
while singing a song**



**You can sign your favorite song,  
the happy birthday song, or the  
alphabet song**

2



**By using hand sanitizer  
and letting it dry on  
your hands**



**Without moving them count to 10**

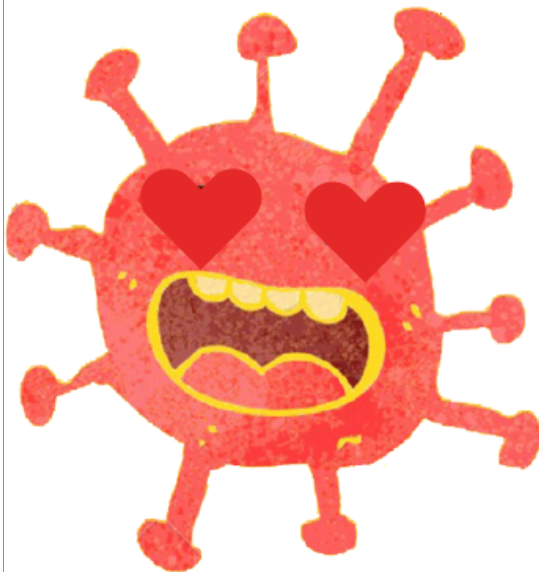
**1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10**

**Once your hands are dry you can get  
back to playing!!**

**If you do all that  
I will not come to visit**



**while the doctors work to find a vaccine  
that will allow me to say hi  
without getting you sick.**



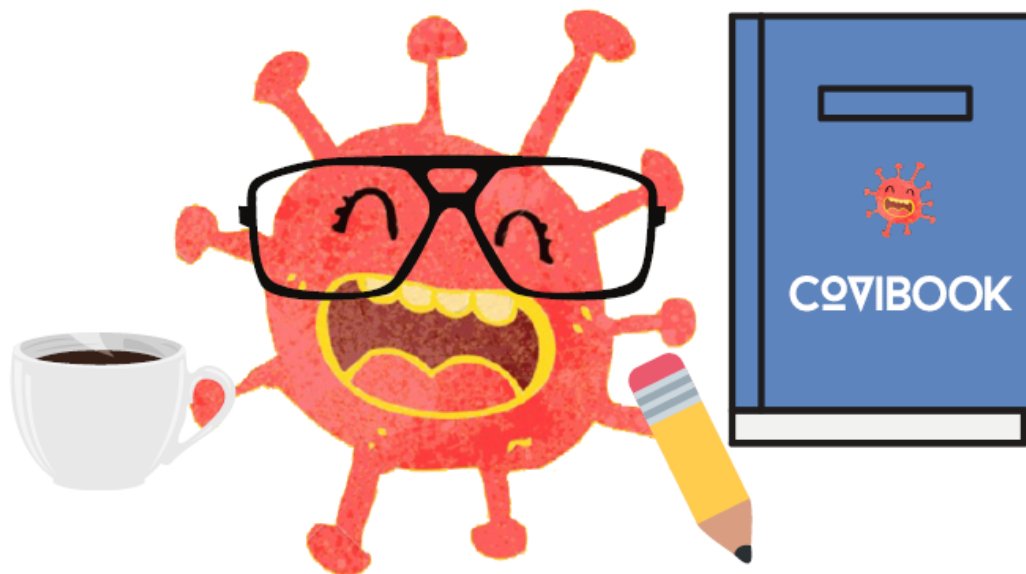
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# THE END



**Download this PDF here:**

**[www.mindheart.co/descargables](http://www.mindheart.co/descargables)**

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**Local Offer**  
for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

[www.telfordsend.org.uk](http://www.telfordsend.org.uk)



# SEND PARENT/CARER

Winter 2019



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PODSForumTelford



PODSTelford



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IASS Telford & Wrekin



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[future.focus@telford.gov.uk](mailto:future.focus@telford.gov.uk)



Southwater 1, Southwater Square,  
Southwater Way, Telford  
TF3 4JG



## Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

[www.telfordsend.org.uk](http://www.telfordsend.org.uk)

### Key features...

- Search for clear and accessible information, advice and sources of support.
- Explore leisure, fun and short breaks activities.
- Find out about specialist services and education health and care plans.
- Learn how schools support special educational needs.
- Use the interactive map showing what is available near to where you live.
- Have your say through our online feedback form.

