

Children and Young People's Wellbeing Service

Questions for Lockdown Learning

- 1. Our daughter has been regressing a little in her behaviour (more tantrums, baby talk etc) - how can we deal with this and help her to manage these feelings?**

This is really, really normal and really common – it's just what we would expect during times of high stress or uncertainty. It's perhaps easier said than done but try not to be too concerned about this, it's very likely that you will begin to see less of this when she is back in school and things start to feel a bit more normal. It can be very difficult for children to express their feelings, particularly in such strange circumstances and when they perhaps don't fully understand what is going on.

This regressive behaviour is really their way of letting you know that they need you a bit more, they may need more soothing and a bit more time from you. Not easy in the circumstances we know but try not to worry about this behaviour or become frustrated with them for it. Offering empathy, validating their worry or frustration and supporting them to regulate these emotions using the techniques we have spoken through today should help.

- 2. *How can I improve my child's social skills when he can't socialize?***
And
- 3. *How can we keep our child socially connected when they only want to see their friends in person?***

This is quite difficult to answer without a bit more detail. Is it that they feel anxious or nervous in social situations? Children's (and adults') social skills have taken a bit of a battering over the last year and so we would expect that socializing may prove a bit challenging or uncomfortable at first. If you do think anxiety might be at the crux of it, gradually reintroducing social contact with those they know well first, will help (including within the home e.g. role play/pretend play). Being back at school should also help, although they may find this unsettling at first. There is an excellent book about how to support children with anxiety – ***"Helping your Child with Fears and Worries"*** by Cathy Cresswell. This is a great place to start. If you are worried about anxiety, do also speak to your child's link worker as it may be that our service could offer you some support.

If you feel their social skills or social development is not as result of anxiety but perhaps something else, it's worth speaking to the school and perhaps to the GP.

- 4. *What should we do if we are really worried about friends, their children and their deteriorating relationships?***

Again, this is quite difficult to answer without a bit more detail. It can be difficult

to approach your friends directly about this, you might worry about upsetting them or of the impact on your friendship. But if it's a good friend, showing your concern and asking if everything is OK may be all that's needed for them to open up and seek some further support.

If you're very worried, you can contact the Single Point of Access to anonymously discuss concerns you might have about a family and particularly if you're worried about the impact on the children.

5. *Is there a way for single parents to connect and support each other?*

Thank you for this question – this is so important and there perhaps hasn't been as much emphasis on single parent families during the pandemic. This might be something your schools might be able to support with, in terms of setting up a network of single parents. There is also a charity that supports single parent families - Gingerbread – do visit their website for further details:

www.gingerbread.org.uk

6. *What are the signs that our child is not ok - suffering from mental health issues?*

This was covered in the workshop. Please refer to the Lockdown Learning Workshop - slide on emotional dysregulation (slide 10) which has been recorded and can be accessed by this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5yEpHh8ZII>

7. *I am worried that my child has lost or is losing his love of learning due to home school. He doesn't want to write, he just keeps saying he hates learning and school.*

This is something we're hearing an awful lot of. And it's perhaps a bit like us saying we hate working from home or that we hate home schooling too! I suppose this is another way of them communicating that they're really fed up of this situation. And this might be about managing yours and their expectations and taking some of the pressure off – you are parents, not teachers. So, as ever, this is all about lots of empathy, lots of validation and really acknowledging that this situation is really, really difficult. Try to tap into what your child is communicating in saying they hate learning and they hate school – what are the emotions they're feeling and then attending to these.

We might also suggest doing shorter sessions with them, really breaking up the subjects they struggle with, with things they really enjoy and feel good at.

And this links to the next question...

8. *How worried should we be or will this be reversed when he goes back to school?*

We would anticipate a period of adjustment with regards to going back to school.

There may be things they're really excited about and things they're going to miss about being at home. For the most part, for most children, we would expect that things will settle down after some time, once things are feeling a bit more routine again and being back at school starts to feel more normal. This was the case following the first lockdown. Normality outside of school will also help, so as things open-up again and social activities with friends, sports clubs etc. re-open, this will also help.

If, after a good chunk of time, you feel they are still struggling – do speak to your class teacher or the link worker at your school.

9. *How can we manage our child's temper at home and how it effects their siblings?*

Hopefully this one will have been covered in the workshop - Please refer to the Lockdown Learning Workshop - slide on emotional dysregulation (slide 10) which has been recorded and can be accessed by this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5yEpHh8ZII>

If you feel the behaviour existed prior to covid/lockdown – then you might want to consider a referral to our service. Please do speak with your school link worker/SENCO to make the referral.

10. *How we can keep our kids focused on their work when there are so many distractions at home?*

Try to set clear and realistic expectations for the day about what can be achieved. Try taking small steps as this will feel less overwhelming. Keeping a balance of a variety of activities – outdoors activities, screentime, reading etc. Involve your child in the decisions about what they need and want to do.

11. *How can parents keep their cool when we have to balance our children's learning needs with our own work pressures or deadlines?*

It can be helpful to try to identify your own feelings and expectations of yourself and your child. Try to self-regulate using calming exercises or breathing before attempting to support your child. This is recommended, but we appreciate that this is not always possible in the moment. It can help to prioritise what is important in that moment – completing the work or the wellbeing of family members? Whatever you decide, try to ensure that the family come back together later (modelling team work) to express how they felt and to be open about how difficult it is – collaboratively. Share your experience of how hard it was for you in that moment, but that you were able to take some time out and then come back.

12. *How can we manage our children's anxiety about getting all the work done?*

Planning the school/work day, try to recognise and identify your own anxiety and model the behaviours you would like your child to show. Liaise with class

teacher directly if you are concerned about the level of work.

13. *When kids are on screens all day and then the only way they can connect with friends is on screens - how worried should we be about screen time?*

It is understandable that parents are concerned about this. Obviously our usual advice to families is to limit screen time, but in the current situation, we're not left with much choice. So try not to be too hard on yourself – this will naturally settle down as children go back to school, because this will automatically cut out a lot of the screen time. Where possible, get outside at least once a day, ensure your child is getting enough physical activity and also introduce non-screen play time at home e.g. pretend play; board games; card games; other activities e.g. cooking/baking; crafts.

14. *What is the best way to deal with total refusal to engage with school work?*

Evaluating what is more important in the moment – to continue with the work in small steps or to take some time out and return to the work when everyone is calm. Sometimes children feel overwhelmed when presented with the day's work as a whole. Try to break things down into smaller "chunks" with regular breaks and rewards throughout the day. Ensure to praise them for all of their efforts, even if it is something small they have achieved. If this is consistent behaviour – refer to the school for support. We know that when a child is experiencing heightened emotions, they are not able to learn.

15. *How can I help my child develop on his school work in his development areas?*

The school teacher is best placed to support you with this. Please discuss this directly with your child's teacher.

16. *How can we remember to celebrate successes and what are some examples of how to do this in a meaningful way for the kids. Without rewarding with chocolate, video games?*

Children always respond well to verbal praise and particularly having their successes or achievements acknowledge by a parent or teacher. We also recommend "Special play/time" with parents 1:1 which offers positive reinforcement and attention. Try to develop their own ability to see their achievements and celebrate them perhaps at the end of each day – what did you do well today? What did you enjoy? Remember to reward and praise a child's **effort** as well as good scores or marks.

17. *How can we keep our child feeling positive when everything is so limited?*

Try to model positive behaviour as a parent. We know that this is a really

challenging time for everyone and that it is hard to enjoy things. But try to focus on what you can still do and the activities that your children enjoy. Perhaps trying something new; art, crafts, cooking, building, climbing, cycling, sewing.

18. How can teachers help to signpost what is essential vs nice to have on homework?

Please discuss this with your child's teacher directly about what is expected.

19. What are the best examples of activities to do at home with your children?

We have activity resources we can share with the school to distribute – please refer to the **Self Care Summer** document on this.