



Family Fun, Engagement and Activities

This unprecedented pandemic has created much disruption and anxiety for children, adolescents, parents and families as a unit, and has presented parents with added challenges to try to keep their children as happy and calm as possible during this time.

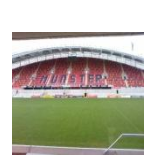


If we try to find some **positives** in the midst of so much anxiety it is that this time can also offer an opportunity for families to spend more **quality** and **fun times** together. Children are happy to be with their parents and siblings just **doing ordinary things together** such as:

- Cooking, baking and eating meals together
- Playing board games which can provide hours of fun together
- Card games, suitable for all age groups (e.g., Go Fish, Uno)



To **exercise** as a family is still possible within the confines of your own home. Many local and national sporting organizations/figures are posting daily exercise routines online which can be done by all family members together.



If you have a private outside garden/space you can all join in playing: Football, Hurling, Rounders, Rugby, Basketball, Frisbee, Table tennis (taking turns) and other table based games or create your own games!



Song, dance and music can also provide much solace and shared enjoyment. At international, national and local level, individual musicians, singers, drama and dance teachers and performing arts groups are posting a series of challenges, exercise routines, online dance classes and theatre workshops.

- Involve your children and adolescents in accessing their favourite **musicians** and **dancers** many of whom are now posting free online classes and concerts
- Encourage children and adolescents **individual interests and talents**



- Encourage them to **write their own** songs, music, create comic pieces, dance moves and create drama pieces, write their own scripts



- The **entire family** can be involved as active participants, audience, make-up artists, costume design or recording of these fun events. Put on shows on Skype/face time for grandparents who are cocooning

- **Watching movies** and old DVDs together. Each family member gets a turn to pick their movie on a particular night

- **Activity based Wi-Fi games** are a great source of family fun. Create different **teams** giving everyone an opportunity to play and be part of different teams within the family



- Spending more **time together with family pet/pets**, grooming, training, playing and helping to take care of farm animals



- **Gardening** if you have an outdoor space weeding, digging, planting seeds flowers/vegetables in soil or in **indoor pots** within your home

- **DIY** use the opportunity to paint, redecorate, de-clutter or reorganise spaces within your home/outdoor space (if available)



- It is important to involve children and adolescents in the **generation of ideas** for your family

- Empathise with how much they are missing their friends, especially adolescents who are missing their developmentally appropriate peer group interactions. Encourage children to write to their friends and for adolescents to keep connected to their peers through text, phone, social media



- Involve adolescents in appropriate decision making, discussions and consultations with regard to helping their younger siblings during this time. Acknowledge their input as vital to helping



you as parents create as much enjoyment and positive memories as a family. The feelings expressed by your children and adolescents are appropriate reactions to unusual abnormal events

Calming Anxiety through Art

Drawing and painting are good activities for mental health and self care as they can:

- Help you feel less stressed, help take your mind off things by distracting you, be a good way to **express** your thoughts and feelings.
- It is not about creating the perfect picture. It is about **enjoying** the process, being able to express yourself and getting caught up in an activity you enjoy doing.
- You don't need to be an expert or to have studied art. Just sitting down and **creating** something just for **fun** can be a great act of self care.



These are some ideas:

For Parents:

A calm adult will help a child stay calm. So make sure to take some time each day for **self care**, 15 minutes is great, five minutes also works.

- Draw a **circle**, outline with a plate. Inside, colour, decorate as you will; patterns, doodles, scribbles, colour, collage.

Visual Journal

- Make your own: Reuse an old book, get different types of paper, punch holes and tie with string, use a sketchbook.

- Some prompts: Make a colour code for your **feelings**, there is no right or wrong colour for your feelings, your choice (e.g., fear, sadness, curiosity, safety, joy, anger, shame, grief, hope, courage)
- What is in my **heart** today?
- Draw a ginger bread man body. How do different parts of your **body** feel? Colour those parts with your chosen colour for those feelings. No judgement. All is good.
- Get a mindful colouring book, put on **some** music and enjoy.

For Children:

Play together:

- Dress up, build hide outs and caves, act a favourite fairy story
- **If you can go outside:**
 - Make wind chimes – tie with string.
 - Make spirals with stones, paths, shapes, mud pies.
- Wash your hands when you come inside!
- **Inside:**
 - Make a **sensory jar** or box: fill a container with soft, squishy, tactile objects.
 - Make playdough. Use it to make a stress ball, animals, a family, characters from a favourite TV programme.
 - *How to make playdough: 8 tbsp plain flour, 2 tbsp table salt, 60ml warm water, food colouring, 1 tbsp vegetable oil; mix together:*
 - <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/playdough-recipe>
 - Draw **stories**.
 - Do some **colouring**.

- Make a **collage**: use old magazines, craft materials, glue, cut and paste pictures and create stories.
- Squiggle games: one person draw a **scribble**, the other turn it into a picture.
- Tangle **doodles**: draw your hand and your child's hand: fill in each hand with simple marks and patterns with coloured markers.
- Make **masks**: if you do not have plastic masks, use sides of cereal boxes. Play pretend wearing the masks.
- Make **puppets**: use old socks. Stick on googly eyes. If children are big enough, they could make mouths and noses by stitching. Otherwise use strong markers.
- Blow **bubbles**:
 - For **calmness**: your child can see if they can control the size of the bubble by taking deep breaths and blowing out slowly or quickly.
 - For a **lively** activity: blow bubbles and your child pops them with a body part that you name, for example: with their knee, elbows, toes etc.



Listening for calmness:

- Ask your child to close their eyes; strike a teaspoon on a glass: listen to the sound until they can no longer hear it. When it has stopped ask them to **listen** to everything they can hear and after a minute ask them to name what they heard.

Catch your worry thoughts:

- Draw a ginger bread man body.
- Ask your child: where is the **worry** in your body and what does it look like?
- Draw this by using shapes and colour.

Adolescents:

- *Visual journal:*

- Get a sketch book, or an old book and tear up, cover up, glue in it.
- **Fingerprint faces:** doodle faces of different feelings onto fingerprints.
- Make art to **music:** put on different beats, moods etc.
- Where do you want to be in five years?
- Journal about things that inspire you.
- Family and **friends** that support who I am.
- Challenges in my life.
- No theme at all – just doodles and random stuff.
- Things that make you **laugh**.



- *Draw:*

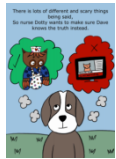
- Cartoon or **anime**/manga style
- Good tutorials here: <https://www.animeoutline.com/>
- Watch this YouTube on making art as self care: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/drawing-or-painting/>
- Extra Art Resources: <https://www.artsforall.ie/>

Social Stories to explain the Coronavirus to Children

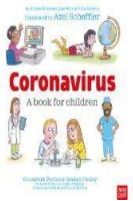
Access the website below for a colourful child friendly book to explain the Coronavirus to young children. English version attached but also available in *many other languages*:

https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf

Social Stories to explain Coronavirus in an age appropriate way to Children: <https://childdevcenter.org/news/social-stories-for-kids-about-covid-19/>



Dave the Dog is worried about Coronavirus a nurse Dotty audio book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XcRFeSqG2I>



Children's book on Coronavirus illustrated by Axel Scheffler (illustrator of the Gruffalo): <https://nosycrow.com/blog/released-today-free-information-book-explaining-coronavirus-children-illustrated-gruffalo-illustrator-axel-scheffler/>

The Story of the Oyster and the Butterfly the Coronavirus and me: <https://edu.princeedwardisland.ca/cardigan/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Book-Oyster-Butterfly.pdf>

Connection

Keep in contact with your families, friends and neighbours (particularly those living alone) via telephone, FaceTime, Skype, Family Group Zoom calls or in getting your children to write a letter or send a postcard or a drawing in the post to their grandparents who are cocooning to keep themselves safe.



Exercise

It is really important for all family members to exercise everyday to boost your immune systems within your home and outside of your home (walk/jog/run/cycle) adhering to social distancing (6 feet apart from others) within 2k of your home (as per the most up to date government guidelines).

Limerick Sports Partnership Getting Limerick Active: <https://www.limericksports.ie/index.php/covid-19>



PE with Joe Wicks:

Free online daily exercise routine for parents/adolescents/children to do together from within the safety of your own home. You can join in live at 9am or play it back at a time that is better for your family.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYlRfn6rYQ>

Dance classes with BBC Strictly Come Dancing professional dancer Oti Mabuse:

At 11.30am or watch it back at a time that is better for your family.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC58aowNEXHHnflR_5YTtP4g



Darcey Bussell retired *professional ballerina* and former judge on BBC *Strictly Come Dancing*, dance classes for children/adolescents and parents: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMeZJqPCwoQ>

Super Troopers with Laya Healthcare is a programme which encourages children and their families to live happier and more active lifestyles. Through short burst, fun daily activities around physical activity, wellbeing and nutrition, this programme helps to promote healthy minds and bodies: <https://www.supertroopers.ie/>

Link to *mindful movement* breaks throughout the day: <https://www.gonoodle.com/>

For *Parents Davina McCall home workouts* freely available for 30 days: <https://ownyourgoalsdavina.com/>



Healthy Eating, Cooking and Baking

It is really important that you try to get 5-7 portions of a combination of fruit and vegetables per day (fresh/frozen) to boost your family's immune system. Avoid excessive caffeine/alcohol/sugar intake as it can increase anxiety and disrupt your sleep weakening your immune system.

Jamie Oliver has provided *free online daily cooking demonstrations* in preparing healthy family meals:

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/jamie-keep-cooking-and-carry-on>

Jamie Oliver also has a YouTube channel *COOKING WITH KIDS*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElrdzncX1Rg&list=PLcpoB2VESJme7ISxXEcXyVtFPsMI78lcL&index=2>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/cake-pops>

<https://www.mummyspages.ie/budget-recipes/>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/kids-baking>

Mindfulness

Remembering to be in the present moment noticing the weather, sound of the birds, nature, flowers, sunrise/sunset, or being fully engaged in an activity with your children/adolescents is evidenced to be really helpful for our physical and mental health.

Daily short and simple meditations are very helpful to bring your mind into the present and provide a welcome break from anxiety and worrying about things that are out of our control.

Mindfulness and Yoga videos and apps for Children and Adolescents:

<http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/mindfulness-relaxation-yoga-videos-kids/>

actcompanion the Happiness Trap App with Dr Russ Harris:

<http://www.actcompanion.com/>



<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>

For Adolescents: <https://www.calm.com/>



National Educational Psychological Service Audio Relaxation Techniques: <https://soundcloud.com/user-719669409/relaxation-techniques-30-03-2020>

Mindfulness for Parents: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/mindfulness-exercises-tips/>

Meditation For Parents: <https://www.calm.com/>

Sleep



Get 8 hours sleep per night as sleep helps boost our immune system. **Avoid being on your phone** getting social media or news updates or watching TV just before bed. Allow your mind and body some time to unwind to enable better quality sleep. **Avoid caffeine** 6 hours before bed and **avoid alcohol** as it disrupts sleep. If you are having difficulty switching your mind off read a book with dimmed lighting, listen to a meditation app on your phone, listen to calming music or nature sounds, practice deep mindful breathing.

Homeschooling



Department of Education and Skills links to support parents/adolescents/children with homeschooling and establishing daily routines:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/advice-to-young-people-while-schools-are-closed.pdf>

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/guide-for-parents-supporting-children.pdf>

Example of Plan for Home School Day:



<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/plan-your-day.pdf>

Tune into RTE2 each morning from 11am to 12 noon to the Home School Hub to view three short segments presented by bilingual Primary Teachers aimed at 1st and 2nd, 3rd and 4th and 5th and 6th class. Project work is housed on [rte.ie/learn](https://www.rte.ie/learn) and RTE Player.

<https://www.rte.ie/tv/programmes/1127275-rte-home-school-hub/>

Early Years, Primary and Secondary School

Parents and students can get access to school books at any level until the end of the school term by clicking the link below for free. Free library access, audio books and other materials are also available for free.

<https://covid19.shanehastings.eu/giveback/#education>

Junior and Leaving Certificate

On-line resources linked by level (Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate) and subject and also come with notes:

<https://ulsites.ul.ie/access/online-study-club>

Exam Papers for Junior and Leaving Certificate

All exam papers for Junior and Leaving Certificate students are also available to access free, at all levels and subjects. This can provide a good structure for doing study.

<https://www.examinations.ie/exammaterialarchive/?i=114.119.110.99.100>

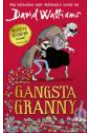
Link to online learning resources for Primary students:

<https://www.twinkl.ie/>

Free eBook collection for Children aged 3–11 years

Help your children learn to read, and love to read, with range of over 100 free eBooks. If you'd like to learn more about how to support your child's reading, visit our [Reading pages](#).

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/foe-home/find-a-book/library-page/>



David Walliams reads one of his story books every morning:
<https://www.worldofdavidwalliams.com/elevenses/>



Media

Limit your news intake via radio/TV/social media to **ONCE** daily from a reliable news source (e.g. RTE or World Health Organisation) to limit news overload.

Avoid having the news on the radio/TV in the **presence of your children/adolescents** to **limit** their **exposure** to fear/anxiety about the impact of the Coronavirus in Ireland and worldwide.

Activities and Resources for Toddlers and Children 0-6 years

Activities for Preschoolers: <https://flyingstart.ie/preparing-for-pre-school/links-to-online-resources-to-support-children-and-parents-during-covid-19/>

Activities for Toddlers: <https://busytoddler.com/2016/11/40-super-easy-toddler-activities/>

Activities for Children aged 2 to 4 years: <https://activeforlife.com/49-fun-physical-activities-to-do-with-kids-aged-2-to-4/>

Activities for Toddlers and Preschoolers: <https://thestay-at-home-momsurvivalguide.com/toddler-activities/>

Activities for Toddlers and Preschoolers:
<https://teaching2and3yearolds.com/20-fun-and-easy-toddler-activities-for-home/>

Activities for children aged 1 to 5 years:
<https://fiveminutemum.com/>

Tip sheet for Parents of children aged 2 to 6 years:

https://ncca.ie/media/1136/tipsheet_play_parents_of_young_children.pdf

YouTube clip on how to make your own playdough:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAIAm6BF0fs&feature=youtu.be>

50 Rainy day Activities: <https://www.mykidstime.com/things-to-do/50-fun-rainy-day-activities-for-kids/>

100 Indoor Activities: <https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/indoor-activities-for-kids/>

Resources for Infants all the way up to Adolescents:

<https://loveparenting.ie/>

ABC Startright Limerick Resources for Parents, Infants and Children:

<https://www.paulpartnership.ie/abc-start-right/>

Activities and Resources for School aged Children

Activities and Resources for 0 to 12 year old children:

<http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie/>

Drawing challenge for school aged children:

<https://www.hitc.com/en-gb/2020/03/31/who-is-will-sliney-how-to-take-part-in-the-drawing-challenge-on/>

Virtual tour of Dublin Zoo:

<https://www.dublinzoo.ie/animals/animal-webcams/>

Children learning how to write and publish:

<https://www.facebook.com/EmuInkSchools/>

The well-known children's author Sarah Webb is also running just-for-fun writing workshops via her Twitter count @ SarahWebb

How to build a fort: <https://www.wikihow-fun.com/Build-a-Fort-in-Your-Room>

50 Rainy day Activities: <https://www.mykidstime.com/things-to-do/50-fun-rainy-day-activities-for-kids/>

100 Indoor Activities: <https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/indoor-activities-for-kids/>

Printable COVID Time Capsule for Children to journal their historic experiences through Art, Drawing, Colouring and Writing:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MaM2RBrqyDeyKFCG8impDgfuZ8a2tIZ-/view>

Resources for Parents from Infants all the way to Adolescents:
<https://loveparenting.ie/>

Barnardos: <https://www.barnardos.ie/>

Keeping Children and Adolescents Safe Online during COVID

<https://www.webwise.ie/>

<https://spunout.ie/life/article/cyber-and-text-bullying>

<http://www.kivaprogram.net/parents/>

Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus

Parent Guide to helping Families Cope:
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>

Colourful Self Care Kit for Children:

<https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/downloads/file/121/self-care-kit-for-children-%E2%80%93-sheffield-nhs-trust>

Hibernation pack for Children:

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/download/766/coronavirus-resources/9745/hibernation-pack-covid-19.pdf>

WHO guidelines for Children coping with Stress:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2

WHO guidelines for Parents coping with Stress:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2

Resources for Parents from Psychological Society of Ireland:

<https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/footer/COVID19-Resources>

HSE website for Online and Telephone access to Mental Health

Services: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/news/supports-and-services-during-covid-19.html>

Adult Mental Health/Counselling Services:

<https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/>

Family and Perinatal (Pre & Post Natal) Mental Health Supports:

<https://zerotothrive.org/covid-19/>

Parental Self-Care: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3262-young-children-at-home-during-the-covid-19-outbreak-the-importance-of-self-care>

Supporting parents in understanding their children's' emotional/behavioural difficulties: <https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

Anna Freud Centre wide range of self care and ideas and resources for supporting Children and Adolescents mental health: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

Niall Breslin (former rugby player, musician, former Voice of Ireland Coach) Mental Health Support for Adolescents: <https://www.alustforlife.com/>

Paul Partnership Parent Supports: <https://www.paulpartnership.ie/covid-19/>

Excellent Resource for ALL the Family outlining freely available Educational, Business, Health and Wellbeing, Sports, Entertainment, Music and Technology resources for adults, adolescents and children: <https://covid19.shanehastings.eu/giveback/>

Official Websites for HSE and Government updates

www.HSE.ie/coronavirus

www.gov.ie

www.HPSC.ie

Mental Health Supports and Services for Children, Adolescents, Adults and Older Adults during COVID-19

COVID Support line Limerick

- **1800832005**
- Email covidsupport@limerick.ie
- <https://twitter.com/CommHealthMW/status/1246054245100670976>

Perinatal Mental Health Service University Hospital Limerick

- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/specialist-perinatal-mental-health/>

Grow

- Six-week programme designed to help people look after their mental health during the current crisis. The content, which includes podcasts, relaxation techniques and practical tasks, is designed to be relevant, reassuring and fun
- Visit <https://grow.ie/category/covid-19-support/>
- Information line **1890 474 474**
- Email info@grow.ie for more information, or while peer support groups are postponed

Turn2Me

- Free online counselling and online support groups for people over 18
- Visit www.turn2me.org

MyMind

- Online counselling service
- Visit www.mymind.org or email hq@mymind.org

Jigsaw

- Mental health information and a Q&A service for young people, their parents and guardians, and those who work with young people. Jigsaw also offers an online group chat service.
- Visit www.jigsawonline.ie

Shine

- Shine are currently providing remote support and an outreach service to people experiencing mental health problems and their families and supporters by phone and email.
- Visit www.shine.ie/covid-19 or email phil@shine.ie

Suicide or Survive (SOS)

- A series of free online wellness workshops and programmes are available from SOS
- Visit www.suicideorsurvive.ie for more information

Samaritans

- Emotional support to anyone in distress or struggling to cope
- Freephone **116 123** (any time, day or night)
- Email jo@samaritans.ie

Pieta House

- Pieta House provides telephone and text-based support counselling for people who are suicidal or engaging in self-harm
- Freephone **1800 247 247** (any time, day or night)
- Text **HELP** to **51444** (standard message rates apply)
- Telephone appointments will be provided to replace face to face appointments - [contact your local Pieta House](#) for details

Childline (ISPCC)

- Ireland's 24-hour national listening service for young people up to the age of 18
- Freephone **1800 666 666** (any time, day or night)
- Text **50101** (from 10am to 4pm every day)
- Chat online at www.childline.ie (from 10am to 4pm every day)

BeLonG To Text Support

- BeLonG To provide support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland
- Text **LGBTI+** to **086 1800 280** to chat in confidence with a trained crisis volunteer (anytime day or night, standard SMS rates may apply)
- While face to face services are closed, information, referral and advice will be provided digitally, by email, SMS, phone call or video conference
- Visit www.belongto.org

Aware Support Line

- Information and support to anyone over 18 about issues relating to their own mood or the mood of a friend or family member, or who experiences depression or bipolar.
- Freephone Support Line **1800 80 48 48** (from 10am to 10pm every day)
- Support and self-care groups nationwide, are cancelled until further notice
- [Life Skills Online Programme](#) continuing as normal
- Email supportmail@aware.ie for services information and support

Crisis Text Line Ireland

- A confidential messaging support service

- Text **TALK** to **086 1800 280** (any time day or night, standard SMS rates may apply)

LGBT Ireland

- Online support and through the helpline for LGBT+ people across Ireland
- LGBT Helpline **1890 929 539** (every day)
- Gender Identity Family Support Line **01 907 3707**
- Email info@lgbt.ie for support or information while face to face services are closed
- An instant messaging service is available 7 days a week, from 6:30pm to 10pm Mon – Thur, from 4pm to 10pm Fridays, and from 4pm to 6pm on Sat & Sun

Mental Health Ireland

- Information and support for people who experience mental health difficulties
- Information line **(01) 284 1166** (from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)
- Visit www.mentalhealthireland.ie or email info@mentalhealthireland.ie for more information

Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Mental Health Service

- Telephone and online services and supports are available while face to face and group services have stopped
- Call **01 8721094** (then press 1) for support, help or advice (from 9am to 5pm every day)
- Visit www.exchangehouse.ie for more information

Bodywhys

- Helpline **1890 200 444** (Monday, Wednesday and Sunday from 7.30pm to 9.30pm and Saturday from 10.30am to 12.30pm)

- Visit www.bodywhys.ie for email alex@bodywhys.ie for more information

Supports for Older Adults

Alone

- Alone provide a COVID-19 support line for older people
- Call **0818 222 024** (from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week)
- Visit www.alone.ie

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

- Practical information and emotional support or information on supports and services
- Freephone **1800 341 341** (Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm and Saturday from 10am to 4pm) or email helpline@alzheimer.ie
- Visit www.alzheimer.ie or www.understandtogether.ie for more information

Seniorline

- Confidential listening service for older people provided by trained older volunteers
- Call **1800 804 591** (lines are open every day from 10am to 10pm)
- Visit www.thirdageireland.ie/seniorline for more information

Age Friendly Ireland

- Age Friendly Ireland have a compiled a list of all Local Authority Community Response Forums, and their contact helpline numbers - these are available to support vulnerable members of communities affected by COVID-19 restrictions
- Visit Age Friendly Ireland for more information