



Some ideas to try during covid restrictions

It can be hard to cope during another lockdown. With children at home as much as they are and with parents/care givers trying to provide home schooling or doing their own work it's understandable that at times emotions can run high when everyone is getting stressed and not so much chance to let off steam.

Children often struggle to keep calm and self soothe. This ability is not in-built but has to be learned. What is in-built in children is to let you know when they are not happy and to look to adults (or older siblings) to see how to cope.

So there are some things that can be done to help life run a little more peacefully.

We still have choices

Whatever the situation, we do have choices in how we behave, this is much easier for adults, children though are very emotional and can find it very hard to make choices especially when upset/frustrated.

Respond rather than React

When stresses are building up it's so easy to get irritable. This feels increasingly uncomfortable and to get rid of this feeling understandably people can snap and get angry. In the short term this can work but can also lead more constant tensions for everyone.

As hard as it can be, try and resist the urge to react. Step in as early as possible to see what your child wants. Just when you feel like *reacting*, take a few deep breaths, wait a few minutes and perhaps you will *respond* differently to your reaction.

Be a swan

Swans appear calm and in control above the surface yet their feet are moving quickly. Try and appear calm even if your emotions are rising inside. Children learn by observing and if they see you keep calm they are more likely to stay calmer.

Praise

Children want to please their parents/carer givers. Life can be calmer if you tell your children what you want them to do and offer a small reward (such as you spending some time with them-15mins?) and join in with what they want to do (play/read/cook/exercise). Best to offer your time rather than sugary snacks/drinks. Giving praise creates a calmer atmosphere rather than telling children what you don't want them to do.



Structure

We all tend to feel calmer when we have a reasonably structured day, we struggle with uncertainty. Where possible keep to the same meal and bedtimes plus whatever time you decide for schooling.

Have breaks

Children's concentration spans tend to be quite short especially when being cooped up. It can help to have regular breaks such as 15 minutes every hour even when doing school work.

You are doing your best

It's an obvious thing to say, but you are not a teacher (unless you are!). Teachers have training to do their job, few parents/carers do. You can only do your best and your energy may vary from day to day, there is no need to try to be brilliant all of the time, **good enough is good enough**.

Gratitude

Given the gloomy news we are constantly being told it's easy to feel quite negative about life at the moment. However no matter what we are going through we can think about three things we can give gratitude for or three things that have gone well in our day, no matter how small, there will be something. Doing this at the end of each day allows us to have a more balanced view and a bit of positivity (also talk about this with your children to see what they have thought about).

This will pass

The reality is that this horrible situation **will** pass, keep the hope that we'll get through this. At times the news will be gloomy, instructions about what we can do will vary. If we accept life is unpredictable now, day to day living can be easier.

.....and breathe!