

Parenting Through Covid-19

Helpful hints to keep home life happy



Welcome to our first 'Parenting through COVID19 Booklet'. The staff of Finn Valley Family Resource Centre Donegal have permitted our Child and Family Support Network to amend their helpful hints to keep home life happy during these challenging times. The Child and Family Support Network is made up of community/voluntary and statutory services that support families to access support services, if and when they need them.

The Child and Family Support Network or CFSN is facilitated by a Coordinator, employed by Tusla and their contacts can be found in useful information at the end of this booklet

Covid-19 is presenting us all with challenges currently. With schools closed and lots of uncertainties for parents, it's more important than ever to use positive parenting and healthy approaches to parenting in the home. Our staff; both as practitioners and parents have put together some articles looking at:

- **Establishing routines in the home**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Encouraging Learning in the home**
- **Managing Behaviour and Consequences**
- **Communicating with Teenagers**
- **Self-Care for Parents**

We've also added some useful information with respect to current service contacts, in addition to helpful links to access reliable information on COVID19

Establishing Routines in the Home

When establishing routines in the home, consistency is important. A parent can first look and see what the difficulties are in the home at the moment. For this piece, we can focus on bedtime routines, so the parent needs to see what is happening for the parent and the child now. Is there a bedtime routine in place, if there is why it is not working, what's happening before bedtime, is the child getting enough exercise throughout the day?

A parent can ask themselves these questions and write the answers down. If we look at the child now at home with no school, no access to friendships and very little outdoors we have to come up with ideas on how to keep these important routines in place. So try to continue with the routines as if your child is going to school. Here is an example of a day time routine:

- **7.30am: Get up**
- **7.45am: Get dressed and brush teeth**
- **8:00am: Prepare food and Eat**
- **8.30am: Do some quick exercise with your child**
- **9:00am: Start some work i.e. painting/artwork**
- **10:00am: Complete some school work**
- **11.30am: Break time**
- **12:00pm: Go outside to the back garden for 30 min**
- **12.30pm: Some creative play (make a den, play with Lego)**
- **1.30pm: Lunch time**
- **2.30pm: Complete some more school work**
- **3.30pm: Finished work for the day (TV time, PlayStation)**
- **4.30/5pm: Dinner time • 6:00pm: Winding down time (reading books, bath time)**
- **7:00pm: PJ's on and brush teeth**
- **7.30pm: Bedtime**

Establishing Routines in the Home

The timetable can be adjusted depending on the age of the child. So if the child is older maybe extend the winding down time. Also if the child is older and they may have more work to complete, you can give extra time to any particular area. Be aware not to spend too long completing school work and to encourage free play as well. There are many routines available online but also completing your own with your children/family is a great fun task. Implementing routines is a good way to keep your house in some order too while everyone is at home. Most importantly keep doing activities together. This could be completing a jigsaw, having a kick about outside, building a fort together, painting a picture, making a castle out of Lego, playing shop and any other fun activities that your family may be used to.

Sample routine below:





Problem Solving – How do we do it?

We all need to develop the ability to apply problem-solving skills when faced with issues or problems that are new to us as parents. The development and use of problem-solving skills also improves our experiences, learning and resilience.

Start off by defining the problem. Be clear and specific about the problem: Often acknowledging, validating and naming the feelings around the problem/behaviour helps the child to understand and make sense of the problem from a different perspective.

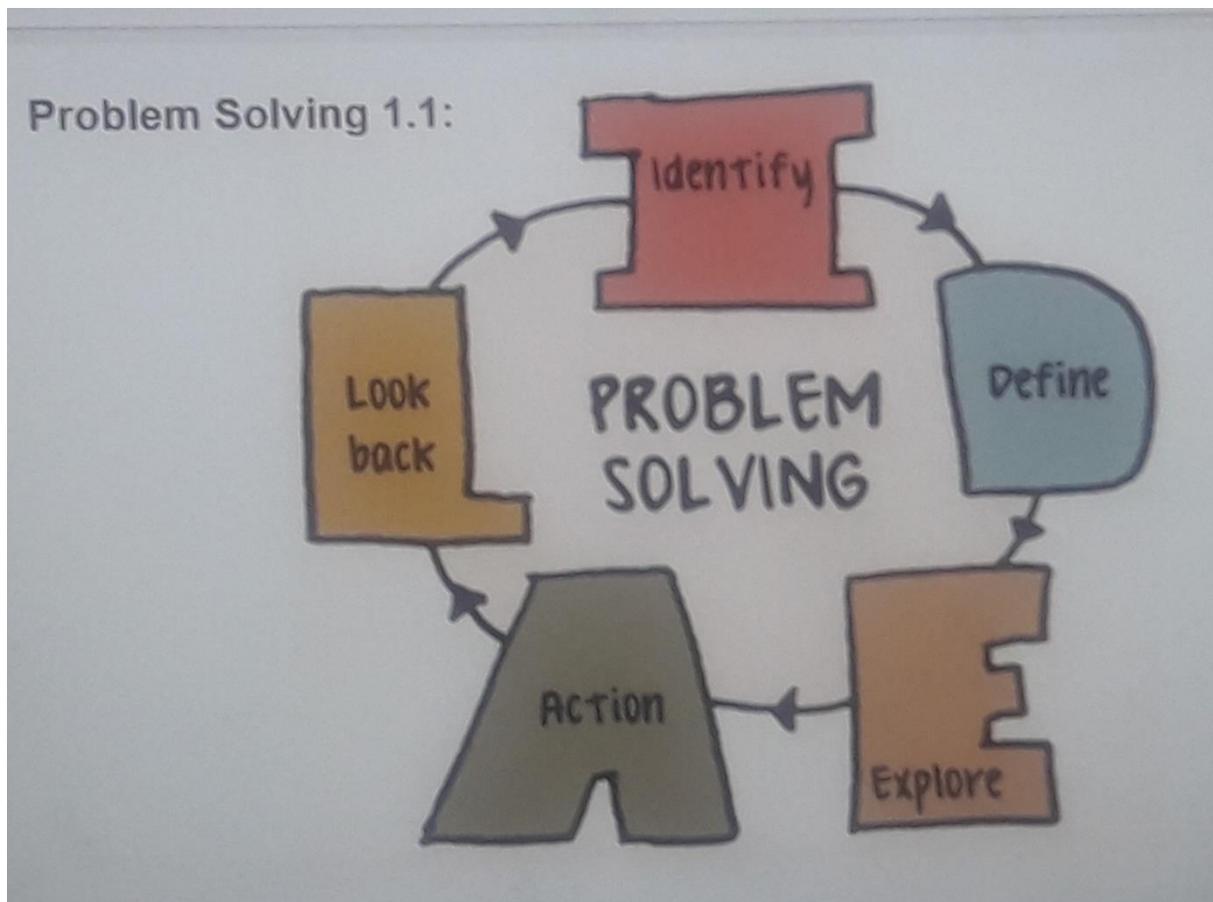
- **Specific:** Be very clear and concrete in what you want to achieve. Define it; what specific problem behaviour do you want to see more of. Use positive reframing and alternatives to 'don't' for example what behaviour you want to see more of, as opposed to what you don't want to see. Consider breaking the goal down into smaller steps, for example instead of 'being good or good behaviour' what specifically do you want to work on or see. What does 'being good' look like and mean?
- **Measurable:** How will you know when you have achieved your goal? How will you be able to measure and monitor the goal/behaviour. What will the child be doing differently, what will you be doing differently? What will others (dad, sister) notice you are doing? What will be different? What will you have started or be doing regularly? What will you be doing less of?
- **Achievable and Attainable:** Please make sure that the goals are not too big or unachievable, start small and don't set yourself up to fail. Be creative for example 'if I had a magic wand or a magic ball' Consider setting smaller goals on your way to the big one. Use scaling questions. Celebrate each success fully, (really make this key). If you don't achieve what you set out to do then ask; what could I do differently and what would make it more likely to succeed next time or to get closer to changing the problem or reaching the goal.
- **Realistic:** Is the goal realistic, are there measures that you need to put in place to make it more realistic or manageable. Again think about breaking it down to one step at a time. For example, if a child is struggling to behave and has several incidents a day, is expecting and setting a goal to behave all day or all week realistic?

(continued)

Take into consideration the child's emotional, developmental age/needs versus their chronological age/needs.

- Time Limited: Set a reasonable and realistic time limit to achieve the goal. When will you review it? When will the behaviour change be measured and what rewards will be given.

Remember praise, encouragement and positive feedback is essential. Other essentials are patience, time, understanding and creativity. We are all on a learning journey.



Josephine Meehan: Family Support Worker, Springboard

Encouraging Learning in The Home

A child will learn best in an environment free from stress. This is a scary time for us all so arguing with children to do their work may not be the answer. Most of us are not trained teachers. We are parents. What our children need is love, reassurance and security. Use the work given by your child's school to suit you and your child. Love your children and support them during this difficult time.

It is extremely useful to continue with the routine where possible especially the bedtime routine. While we must always prioritise our children's wellbeing, it is important to try continue with learning to avoid any difficult transitions back to the classroom, whenever that may be. Maybe let your children have a part to play in the planning of their day.

Try to avoid an unhealthy overreliance on screen time. Too much screen time has very negative effects on physical and mental health as well as disrupting sleep patterns. This is something we can model for our children and be mindful of the amount of screen time we as parents are exposing ourselves to.

If today, your children complete some academic work, praise their efforts. If you have more than one child, try to allocate a time in the day spent on their school work and where possible, be available to your child to offer support and encouragement when needed. Maybe set up a working space for your child and ensure they have enough light and appropriate stationary for the tasks they have been given by their teacher.

Enjoy the bonus of extra family time. Why not do arts and crafts, board games, baking, jigsaws, dancing or singing. Children love nature walks, building dens and reading books together. Children can learn in many different ways.

Your children can be very helpful in the home helping with chores; we may need to invest some time in teaching them the skills. We can teach our children to plant, to cook, to make their bed, to fold clothes or do make shopping lists. Express gratitude with your children. Allow them to regain an appreciation for sunshine, school, nature and hugs.

Accept that we all have no control over the current situation. Try not to think too far ahead and plan for each day as they come. Appreciate this forced downtime in a world that is so fast paced.

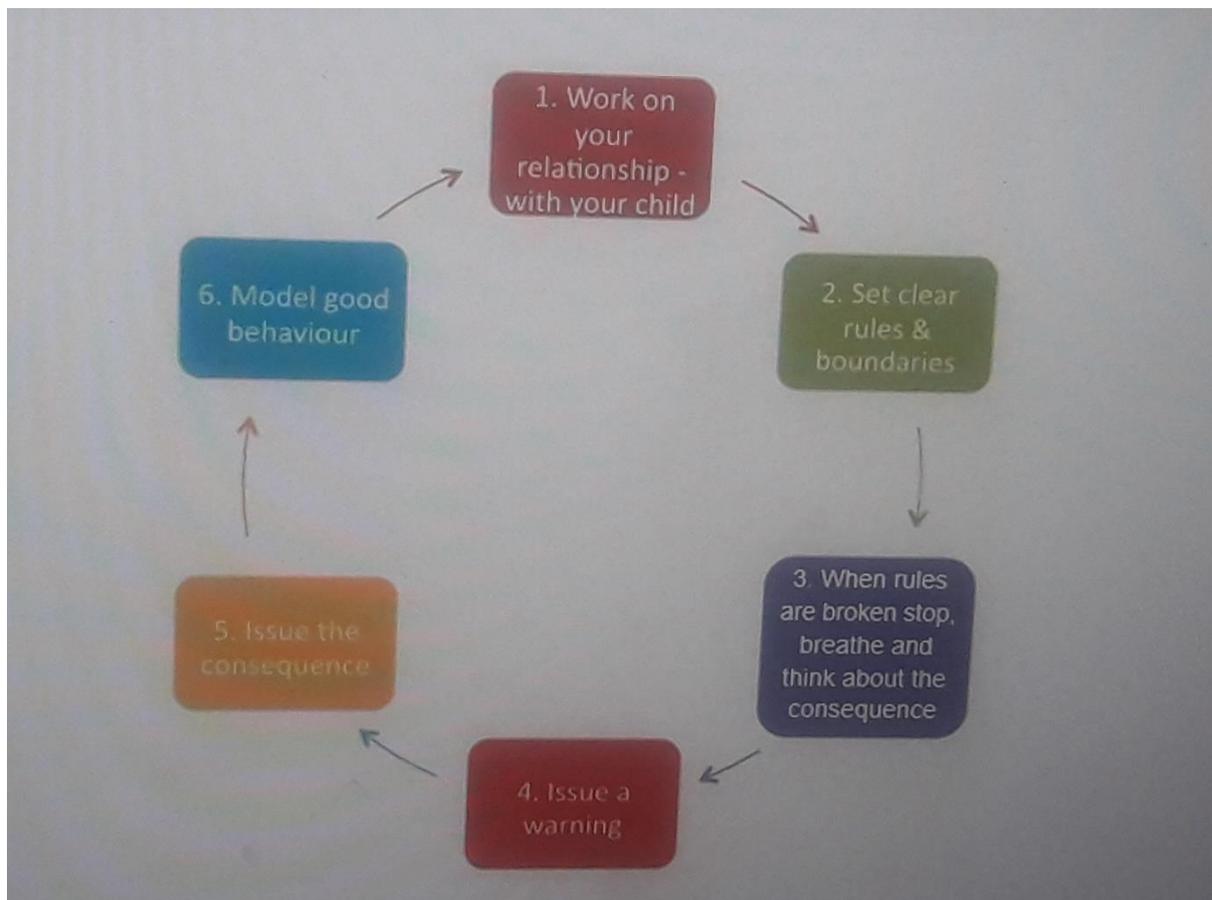
Managing behaviour and using consequences is one of the greatest tasks of being a parent & one of the hardest to get right. Fortunately for us parents, the opportunity to practice managing behaviour and using consequences is not something you'll only get one chance at. Not many or any of us that I know are blessed with children who do not push their boundaries at one or more points in their lives, so we get lots of opportunities to try to get managing these behaviours right. Firstly there is no need to feel any sense of failure; there are factors in our children's lives that we cannot control. However, with a little guidance there are things that we can do in our homes, which do not require the help of a professional.

Challenging behaviour can manifest from a range of areas, some may be evident in the home environment or some in school. Depending on the age of the child will determine the range of external factors influences their behaviour. Some of these factors are but not limited to: interactions at home, hormonal changes, learned behaviour, personality, fear, anger, attachment, boredom, communication difficulties, learning difficulties, not feeling listened to, want of control, lack of attention, ADHD.

Regardless of whether you know the cause of the behaviour or not, there are steps as a parent you can take to manage these behaviours. The first of these steps I believe is to spend some time with your child, sometimes life gets busy and we get carried away that we forget or don't get the opportunity to spend quality time talking or playing with our children; take the time to understand them and talk about any worries, fears they may have that you may not be aware of, but don't push for too much information just now, just spend time with your child. Try to maintain open lines of communication with your child, teach and support communication, whether it's a chat on the way to school or a walk. Always try to eat dinner together and switch off all electronics, its helps.

Managing Behaviours and useful Consequences

When behaviours occur that you're unhappy with it may be necessary to identify some specific and realistic consequences for behaviour. If you live with your partner be sure they're on board with this too, work as a team when you can. Always make sure the consequences fit the action, don't over punish and make sure you remain calm, take a step back yourself if needed. Think about the consequence before the action takes place so that you know what you are going to say, in the heat of the moment it's easy to say a consequence that is not fitting of the action or one too severe to carry out. Once your child is calm, however long this takes, then talk to them, explain why you were upset and why you issued the consequence, give them the opportunity to apologize but keep the consequence. Finally model good behaviour, your child is watching and learning from you every day.



Connecting with Teenagers

This is an extremely difficult time for teenagers too. They are missing their friends and their 'normal' life routines and school. Exams that they have spent their school lives working towards are up in the air and worries about older family members may also be playing on their minds. As parents it's a time to prioritise the important things like staying healthy and ensuring that our teenagers know that we care and love them. It's about going back to basics. Below are a number of options or ideas for parents around connecting with Teenagers.

- Having meals together is so important.
- Make time for each of your children/teenagers to talk to them but perhaps more importantly to listen to them. Spend time with them.
- Get involved in activities together.
- Start a family history or oral history project by connecting with relations recording the conversations about when they went to school, what they did during school holidays, working on the farm, famous or infamous relations or what everyday life was like.
- Internet is vital for teenagers it enables them to stay in touch with friends and to access you tube, Netflix, x box and of course school work and some sense of normality.
- Improvement/practice of favourite sport if space and social distancing allows.
- Board games and cards are good too, although be prepared for the cheating!
- For the nature lovers there are lots of ways to get involved e.g. springalive.net
- There are also loads of resources on line that are offering support with revision e.g. UCD are offering support with leaving cert Maths. (see useful information at end of booklet)
- Get involved with your young person and take an interest. Stay safe and healthy

Self-Care for Parents

There's never been a more important time to practice self-care. As parents we've been faced with a situation that is beyond our control therefore it is important to check in with ourselves and how this is affecting us.

The idea of getting time for ourselves is promoted a lot, but as a parent, particularly if you have younger children in the household, it can be hard or even impossible. Taking some scheduled time doing something you like or find relaxing can make a huge difference.

If you struggle to find time, try to take moments throughout the day. Can you spend a few minutes enjoying a cuppa? Listen to your favourite song? Try to identify some time for yourself, to do something that you enjoy. See some examples below.



Useful information & contacts North Dublin

Family Support Services:

Aster Family Support/ Family Resource Centre: Family support service continues providing practical and emotional supports by phone and online as well as food parcel deliveries. Referrals can continue to be made using website www.asterfamilysupport.ie ; 01 5161146 and email info@asterfamilysupport.ie

Baldoyle Family Resource Centre: Centre closed but continuing to provide meals on wheels' service; counselling support to parents/children online; addiction support/outreach to adults/teenagers at risk and children's activities online.
Contact Joan Bolger at 086 0394783

Mountview Family Resource Centre: Continuing parent /child support groups using zoom.
Contact 01 8206171

Barnardos: You can make contact with this service by phoning 1800 910 123 between 10.00am and 2.00pm Monday to Friday or by emailing parentsupport@barnardos.ie.

Cairde: Advise, Support and Advocacy to Migrant Families: info@cairde.ie

<http://www.cairde.ie/change-to-cairde-services/>

Daughters of Charity Child & Family Service: Continuing to provide support to families in Balbriggan Family Centre:0860353834 or 0864108848; Aster Beo Dublin 15: 0860353827or 0863896657. Dublin Safer Families: 0861428816
Springboard/Turas Dublin 5/17/13: 0860353810

Blanchardstown Drugs Taskforce: Maria McKay: 0879276477.
Gerry Ryan Tolka River Project 0876684671; Sara Jane Leonard FSS:0879574215

Regional Drugs Taskforce, Swords: Siobhan at 0867935644

Domestic Abuse

North County Dublin Domestic Abuse Support Service (NCDDASS): Offering emotional/practical/legal support and safety planning guidance. Referrals can be made through 0870624341

Women's Aid helpline: 1800341900

Aoibhneas: 01 8670701

Saoirse: 01 4630000

Male Advice Line Freephone 1850241850

Sonas: 01 8662012

Drogheda Refuge: 041 9844550

Education Support Services:

http://www.education.ie/en/The_Department/Announcements/plan-your-day.pdf

http://www.education.ie/en/The_Department/Announcements/relaxation-techniques.pdf

School Completion(SCP)

North Fingal SCP telephone Michelle 0861723477 also on Facebook

SCP Swords: telephone James Kavanagh 0870647149. James.kavanagh@scp.ie

Educational Opportunities Program Blakestown/Mountview eopscp@gmail.com

TOFE, Riversdale 01 8201488

TESS: Providing educational support to families with Young People/Children's accessing school programmes and preparing for exams. www.tusla/tess.ie

EWO helpline: 01 7718815

Empower support to access unemployment benefits due to Covid-19.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7f67qDJZal&feature=youtu.be>

Foroige: All Foroige clubs are closed at present but staff are continuing to engage with Young People and their families using technology. Contact details: Jay Fitzgerald at 086 6060735

Crosscare Youth Service: www.facebook.com/crosscare1

Teen Counselling: 01 5574705

Health Services:

Hselive 01850241850 provide information and advice about the Irish Public healthcare system

www.hse.ie provides information re symptoms, treatment and prevention of Covid19

Local Authorities

Fingal County Council –Community Response helpline 01 8905000. Covidsupport@fingal.ie

Offering support re food delivery/ appointments/social isolation engagement/pharmacy collection in this geographical region

Fingal Digi fit: - <http://learning.fingal.ie/course/view.php?id=136>

Daily Kids challenge: <http://learning.fingal.ie/course/view.php?id=138>

Dublin City Council – Community Response 01 2222222

Covidsupport@dublincity.ie Offering support re food delivery/ appointments/social isolation engagement/pharmacy collection in this geographical region

HOMELESS: Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE)

Homeless Freephone Helpline 1800 707 707

If worried about becoming homeless please contact

Homeless Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) & Place Finders Team

Celine Duff at 01 2226112



TÚSLA



Mental Health Services:

Jigsaw Youth Mental Health Support: Offering online group support twice daily and support from clinicians but must register 3 hours in advance at <https://www.jigsaw.ie>.

HSE services

Child: CAMHS: Swords: 01 8075392 Balbriggan: 9213355
Adult: Curam, Swords: 8403391 Hampton, Balbriggan: 9213200
HSE 24-hour helpline: 1800111888 www.yourmentalhealth.ie

Samaritans: 116123

Text YMH to 0861800280

Pieta House: Helpline text HELP to 514444
Email mary@pieta.ie

Travellers Support helpline: 1850241850

Tusla Child and Family Agency

In these challenging times associated with Covid-19, unprecedented stresses can build up, that require support/direction/guidance or information. Contact us at 01 8708000 and request to speak with a member of the Family Support Team.

CFSN Coordinator Swords to Balbriggan: Nora at 087 715 3122
CFSN Coordinator Dublin 15: Liz at 087 467 8966
CFSN Coordinator Dublin 5/17/13: Brian at 087 171 9761

If you are worried that a child is at risk of abuse or harm, please contact Tusla at 01 8708000. If you are unable to contact us (after 5pm) please contact the gardai

Finally, the link below:

Parenting Through COVID 19 by the World Health Organisation:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advicefor-public/healthy-parenting>:

Please remember that you can access all the information required about Covid-19 at www.hse.ie/covid19