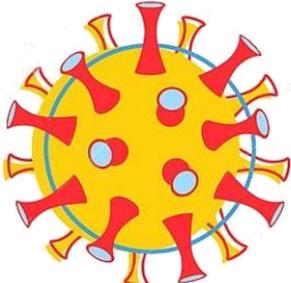




Stay at Home Survival Guide



CORONA  VIRUS

Acacia

The Stay at Home Survival Guide

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www.acacia.org.uk



Introduction

Welcome to the Acacia guide to staying at home. At Acacia, we appreciate that having to isolate is an extremely difficult thing to do. As humans, we are social creatures, and feeling close to friends and family is something that keeps us emotionally and mentally well. This is so much more difficult, if you are expecting a baby or you are a new mummy. You will be experiencing biological, psychological and social changes. You will have additional caring responsibilities and going through huge changes to your life in general. Suffering from low mood, anxiety and depression in addition to this will make life at this time feel overwhelming. At Acacia Family Support, we understand this, so we have put this survival guide together, to help support you at this extremely difficult time.

As you've probably already noticed the guide does contain quite a lot of information and we don't want to overwhelm you. You may decide to read it a bit at a time, or dip in and out of it. However you do it, we hope that this information will be helpful to you over these coming weeks.

We are a Christian organisation. Love and prayer are central to our work. We will be praying for all our families, and searching for innovative ways to support you further. Here are some trusted strategies that will help to bring some normality and improve your mood, in a world that is currently very abnormal.

Things to remember and Helpful Strategies

- **Changes to our mental health; including low mood, stress, increasing worry, anxious thoughts and feelings can fluctuate daily.** Eventually these feelings will stabilise and return to normal. It is important to remember that this difficult situation and the changes to your mental health are temporary. Your situation and symptoms will improve, you will feel better in time and you will come through this difficult period with every new day.
- **Mornings can be the hardest.** This is due to lots of factors, lack of sleep, low blood sugar (due to fasting through the night), excessive worry, and apprehension about the day ahead. Usually once we have begun our day, implemented our routine, taken a shower, breakfast etc. we start to feel more settled and our mood will begin to improve and anxiety can begin to reduce.
- **The only thing we can change is this moment.** Each moment is a new moment, a new opportunity to feel better. If you can focus your attention on the here and now, this very moment, and recognise you have control of this moment, this can help to alleviate anxiety and worry thoughts. In each new moment, we can chose to think differently, we can chose to tackle a task, affirm ourselves, affirm others, etc. This is something to be practised, but

each moment we choose to do this, we get better and stronger at choosing what we want to think, say and do differently.

- **Feeling close to those we love is important to our wellbeing.** Whilst this is difficult right now, we can stay in touch with loved ones, using social media, Face Time, Zoom, House Party etc. Increasing the bonds with those we live with will also improve how you feel. This is always improved through playful interactions, being kind to one another, understanding what each other needs and wants, being affectionate, listening to one another, finding solutions to problems. Whilst living in close proximity can be very hard, it is also an opportunity to deepen our relationships and bonds with those we love. Babies and children just want our attention. Other than having their basic needs met, the next most important thing to them is you, your attention and your love. Your face, your voice, you holding and cuddling them, comforting them, and talking to them. You are their world. This doesn't mean you need to spend every minute of the day being their focus. But having several interactions throughout the day, whereby your baby or child, has your undivided attention, will make them feel loved, fulfilled and happy. This will also make you feel better too. If this isn't coming naturally, because of low mood, anxiety or for other reasons, make this an act of your will, and eventually the feelings will follow. This is true for all members of your family. You are enough and everything they need, just as you are.
- **A sense of achievement helps us to feel good.** When we accomplish something, we feel a surge of feel good feelings. When we are low, we often feel demotivated to do anything. Tackling something small to begin with, can help us to begin to experience this sense of achievement. This in turn motivates us to then tackle something else. It doesn't have to be something big, it might be something like loading the dishwasher, (which when feeling low, can feel like a huge task), once complete, we might then feel inspired to clean a cupboard for example. As we achieve something we didn't think we could, our confidence improves and we feel better about ourselves. This can create a snowball effect and we can go from strength to strength. This isn't just about work, this might be about getting back into a hobby you've stopped doing, craft, knitting, sewing, art, exercise, whatever you choose, whatever you enjoy that gives you a sense of pleasure.
- **Doing things that are necessary alleviates stress.** Important things that need tackling such as paying a bill, having a difficult conversation, cleaning, etc. These tasks can feel stressful if we feel unable to tackle them. They tend to overwhelm and consume us. However, once they have been completed, we can instantly feel relieved and stress levels can significantly reduce. Tackling each problem, one step at a time is a manageable way of dealing with an overwhelming task. Write a plan of how you will tackle a problem. Resolving necessary tasks instantly alleviates stress and helps to improve your confidence in tackling difficult tasks in future.

- **Eating well is important** to stay physically, mentally and emotionally well. Appetite can increase or decrease when we are affected by low mood. Not eating properly, can affect sugar levels and energy levels, which if too high or too low, can affect how we feel mentally. Guidance on eating well can be found online at the NHS Eat Well guide <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>
- **Good quality sleep is imperative to improve mental health.** This is very difficult when you have recently given birth, and it can take up to 4 months for a baby's sleep pattern to establish. If you are sleep deprived, try sleeping when your baby sleeps. If you can, go to bed early. Have a relaxing bath and a warm milky drink (caffeine free) half an hour before going to bed. If you can share nights with your partner, this could help you to catch up on your sleep. As babies get older, the gaps between sleeping become longer. Understanding your baby's sleep pattern can be helpful. For help with your baby's sleep, more guidance can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/getting-baby-to-sleep/>
- **Exercise** may be the last thing you feel like doing, but it can actually help you feel less tired. Walking with your baby is probably the easiest form of exercise. Try to go out every day for a walk with your baby and remember to observe social distancing rules (stay 2 metres away from anyone else).
- **It's ok not to be ok.** This is a highly stressful difficult time. Crying is a release of our emotions. Crying is natural and it serves a purpose. It helps to release tension; it releases our difficult feelings and thoughts. We often feel better after a good cry.
- **On average every day, we all have about 70,000 thoughts.** Lots of these thoughts just pop into our head. We don't invite them in, we don't choose them, we might not want them, they just appear. Some thoughts might not be helpful, they might be frightening, or not very nice or self-loathing. Thoughts are just that, thoughts. They are not facts, they are not true, they can be unhelpful and inaccurate. If you are experiencing thoughts like this, try to recognise these are just thoughts. Try distracting yourself with your routine, listening to music, having a conversation. If these thoughts continue to cause distress, you can refer for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with your GP. For information on unhelpful thoughts you can visit this NHS site <https://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/unhelpful-thinking-podcast.aspx>
- **Worry and anxiety about coronavirus** is normal and understandable. Shift your focus onto what you can control; as detailed above, it is just the here and now, each choice you make throughout the day. Your routine, your activities, what you say and what you do. Limit access to the news and have an allocated worry time of about 10 minutes to think about it or to speak to a trusted friend about it. If you have older children, limit their time

to the exposure about the virus on the news. Children’s brains aren’t fully developed and they struggle to balance their fears with rational thoughts. Try some mindfulness to alleviate worry, a link to headspace to help with this is below. Using your senses, can also alleviate anxiety, touch – have a nice bubble bath, wrap your baby in a cosy blanket, stroke your pet. Smell – Smell a nice plant or flower, spray a favourite perfume, your favourite essential oil. Hearing – play calming music, go outside and listen to the birds, use a soothing calm voice with your children. Vision – Go outside for a walk (maintaining social distancing – at least 2 metres from others) and look at flowers, people, houses. The key is to take your focus outside of yourself.

- At times of stress and anxiety, we are often prone to using strategies that are designed to help but prove counter-productive. For example, you may Google symptoms to try to calm yourself down, even though it is unlikely to ever make you feel better. When our strategies for de-stressing instead increase our anxiety, it is time to take a step back and ask if there is anything more helpful, we can do.
- In the case of COVID-19, checking usually includes constant monitoring of news updates and social media feeds, which significantly increases anxiety – only serving to reassure us momentarily, if at all. So, tuning off automatic notifications and updates on COVID-19 is more helpful. Instead, just check once a day using the most reliable, impartial sources of information updates on COVID-19. The absolutely best place for this is www.gov.uk/coronavirus rather than alarmist news or social media feeds that exacerbate worry unnecessarily. Information can be reassuring if it is rooted in facts. It is often the intolerance of uncertainty that perpetuates anxiety rather than fear of illness itself.



- **Notice and create some positives out of the adversity**, this can be really hard if you are feeling overwhelmed, this is something to aim for. As your mood lifts, this will become easier. Even though we are facing challenges ahead, we are also facing some things that will have silver linings. We may get to spend more quality time with our immediate families. Think about some of the positives that are coming out of this crisis on a global scale, such as the benefits to the environment.

Survival Guide Routine

- **If you can begin the day with a quiet time**, (not easy to do with a young baby and young children), but even if it is just 10 minutes this will set you up for the day. This is a good way to ground yourself in the here and now and begin your day with a healthy and positive

outlook, it can also help to calm you. It can help to prevent your mind from becoming immersed in worry and unhelpful thoughts. This will help you to focus on your day. Some people pray or practice mindfulness, or use the exercise mentioned earlier where you focus on your senses. A suggested prayer is at the bottom of this guide, together with a link to a mindfulness app to support you with this technique. It's important to remember you have everything you need to take one step at a time to get you through the day and we're here to help.

- **Keep to a routine**, routines keep us mentally well and help us to feel safe. You might have a shower, style your hair, if you normally wear makeup, put this on, and continue to stick to your normal routine as much as possible. Keeping children and babies in a routine will give them structure and help them to feel calm and safe.
- **As much as possible have breakfast at the same time each day** to keep to the routine. Put the radio on in the background, upbeat music if possible or the TV, to create an atmosphere that is lively.
- **It is good for us, our children and babies to be outside, and to exercise.** It is ok to go for walks at this time of staying at home, as long as we are adhering to social distancing rules of 2 metres. Having a brisk walk in the morning will set you up for the day and lift your mood.
- **Schedule phone calls or face time calls to your friends** and family throughout the day. Keep helpline numbers to hand, there are several in the helpline section of this document. We all need lots of contact during this difficult time. Friends and family will be happy to hear from you also.
- **Schedule play activities and learning activities with your children/baby throughout the day.** We have a selection of links to resources for children in this document. These can be broken up with regular refreshment breaks, lunchtime, rest periods and some TV time.
- **Prioritise tasks at this time.** It doesn't matter if you don't complete all your household chores. Make yourself a list each day of the essential tasks and desirable. Be kind to yourself and don't have high expectations during this time. Each task you complete, acknowledge as an accomplishment and congratulate yourself for.
- **Make time for yourself if you can.** A hot bath, a face mask, paint your nails, cleansing your face. Whatever it is you do, to make yourself feel good, try and fit in at least one pamper activity each day.

- **Keep mealtimes as easy as possible.** Refer to the healthy eating details above and see www.myrecipes.com for ideas.
- **After teatime, have a good routine in place for children/babies.** Try and keep with the school night routine. This might be a little TV or quiet play time, a bath, a warm milky drink, a story and bedtime.
- **Once the children are in bed, it's your time and if you have a partner, your time together.** You could watch a movie together, have a meal together, play a game, sit in the garden etc. If you are alone, you could have a bubble bath, watch a good movie, phone friends, read a book or something else you enjoy. Whilst this sounds idyllic, we appreciate it's not easy to do when you feel exhausted. However building an activity into your evening can be enjoyable, give you structure and help to break up your evening from your day.
- **Keep a journal of your day.** Write down what you have accomplished, what was enjoyable, and what you are thankful for. Remind yourself that you are doing the very best you can and this is good enough.

Suggested Prayer for Each New Day

Dear Lord, Thank you for this new day. Thank you that we are a day closer to the coronavirus restrictions ending and the virus being beaten. I ask you to be with me throughout the day, help me to remember I have all the resources I need to get me through the day. Help me to see the wonderful mum or mum to be that I am, help me to enjoy my children/baby, help me to have more energy, more peace and more joy. Help me to know that you are in control and what is happening is for a season only, and very soon, all of my life will return to normal. Amen

Mindfulness resource – www.headspace.com

Helplines and Useful resources

National PND/mental health helplines and support:

Every Mind Matters Advice, links and practical tips to look after your mental health
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

PANDAS: Pre and Postnatal Depression Advice and Support:
0843 28 98 401 Daily support: 9 am to 8 pm, and Facebook support

PNDandme.co.uk

#PNDChat

#PNDHour Wednesdays, 8 pm (connecting with others and providing mutual support)

OCD Action <https://www.ocdaction.org.uk/> **0845 390 6232**
support@ocdaction.org.uk. Providing support and information for anyone with OCD

CALM CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason. Call 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight) or Webchat is available from 5pm to midnight at <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/>

Samaritans: freephone 116 123 (24/7) – you don't have to be in a crisis to call.

If you are suffering a mental health crisis:-

In a life threatening situation call 999

Alternatively please contact your mental health crisis team:-

For BSMHFT (25yrs and over) call 0121 301 5500
For Forward Thinking Birmingham (24 yrs and younger) 0300 300 0099

Alternatively call 111 or request an urgent GP appointment.

General Resources

Family Lives

Helpline: 0808 800 2222 9 am to 8 pm Mon-Fri, 10 am to 3 pm at weekends. Free from landlines and most mobiles.

familylives.org.uk

Family Lives offers support to help you to achieve the best relationship possible with the children that you care about, as well as supporting parenting professionals. This is provided through their helpline, extensive advice on their website, email and live chat services, befriending services, and parenting/relationship support groups.

Turn2us

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

Turn2us is a national charity helping people when times get tough. We provide financial support to help people get back on track

Home-Start

home-start.org.uk

Home-Start volunteers help families with young children struggling with postnatal depression, isolation, physical health problems, bereavement and many other issues.

Unfortunately, they are experiencing a high level of referrals at the moment so there could be a wait before you receive support.

MumsMeetUp

mumsmeetup.com

MumsMeetUp connects mums locally and across the UK. It provides a quick and simple solution for mums to find others in their area, in the same boat, and to go on the journey of being a mum together - creating proper real-life friendships for them and their children. Within just a few clicks mums are able to search their county and locality to find mums similar by age, age of child and circumstances (such as mums to be, working mums, single parent mums & more). Additionally, mums of children with disabilities are able to search by similar conditions, as well as location. It is a web based app which works just as well on mobiles as on all screen sizes.

Mumsnet

mumsnet.com

Mumsnet makes parents' lives easier by pooling knowledge, advice and support on everything from conception to childbirth, from babies to teenagers. It is the most popular parenting site in the UK

Netmums

netmums.com

A unique local network for Mums (or Dads), offering a wealth of information on both a national and local level. Once registered, you can access details for all kinds of local resources, from child-friendly cafes to childminders, places to go etc.

Gingerbread

Single Parent Helpline: 0808 802 0925

gingerbread.org.uk

Gingerbread provide information and online support to help single parents support themselves and their family. The leading national charity working to help lone parents and their children.

Families Need Fathers

Helpline: 0300 0300 363

fnf.org.uk

Help with shared parenting issues arising from relationship breakdown whether you're the mum or dad, married or unmarried.

Grandparents Plus

Call: 0300 123 7015

grandparentsplus.org.uk

Grandparents Plus supports grandparents and other relatives raising children who aren't able to live with their parents.

New Family Social

Helpline: 020 3880 2683

newfamilysocial.org.uk

New Family Social promotes the care and upbringing of children by LGBTQ+ adopters and foster carers by allowing these families to socialise and share support in a safe environment.

Pink Parents

pinkparents.org.uk

Pink Parents offer a range of support services and social activities for all Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual families, whether you are considering parenting, have grandchildren, are fostering or adopting or are an Uncle or Aunty, PinkParents can offer support and a place to meet new friends.

BeingAStepParent

beingasteparent.co.uk

BeingAStepParent contains over 90 articles written by experts who continually update and add new content

Getting Baby To Sleep

CRY-SIS HELPLINE

Helpline: 08451 228 669

<https://www.cry-sis.org.uk/>

For parents with crying babies and sleepless nights - Lines open 7 days a week 9am-10pm

A UK charity offering help and support to parents with babies who cry excessively or have sleeping problems

How to soothe a crying baby podcast - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2C8MkY7Co8>

Helping Your Baby To Sleep

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/getting-baby-to-sleep/>

NHS pregnancy and baby guide for helping to get your baby to sleep

Resources for Children/Home-schooling

Twinkl

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

A website that teachers/parents use for learning material. It is currently offering free access to its resources now for all parents.

PE with Jo

Youtube

Jo Wickes (the body coach) is doing a live 'PE class' at 9 am daily. Just head to YouTube and type in 'PE with Jo'. A great way for mums with school children to kickstart their day and some sense of routine.

FAMILY STAY AT HOME TIPS & IDEAS

Facebook Group

Search 'Lockdown Tips and Ideas' on Facebook and join. It is absolutely amazing! There's constantly live videos of things you can make and do with your kids, cooking videos, yoga, etc.

CHASE THE RAINBOW

Facebook Group

Search Facebook group 'Chase the Rainbow' it encourages children to paint/colour a rainbow and stick it in the windows at the front of their house to spread joy.

More Online Kids/Home-schooling Resources:

Just google these names:

BrainPop
Curiosity Stream
Tynker
Outschool
Udemy
iReady
Beast Academy (Math)
Khan Academy
Creative Bug
Discovery Education

YouTube Channels:

Crash Course Kid
Science Channe
SciShow Kid
National Geographic Kid
Free School
Geography Focu
TheBrainScoo
SciSho
Kids Learning Tub
Geek Gurl Diarie

Websites

Scholastic has created a free learn-from-home site with 20+ days of learning and activities.

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

Pretend to travel the world. Go on a virtual tour of these 12 famous museums.

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

Free curriculum - everything from preschool activities to 12th grade is here!

<https://allinonehomeschool.com/>

List of thinking games by grade:

<https://allinonehomeschool.com/thinking/>

Others (just in case you've run out already!):

<https://www.starfall.com/h/>
<https://www.abcya.com/>
<https://www.funbrain.com/>
<https://www.splashlearn.com/>
<https://www.storylineonline.net/>
<https://pbskids.org/>
<https://www.highlightskids.com/>
<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>
<https://www.coolmath4kids.com/>

<http://www.mathgametime.com/>
<https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>
<http://www.literactive.com/Home/index.asp>
<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/>
<https://www.switchzoo.com/>
<https://www.seussville.com/>
<https://www.turtlediary.com/>
<https://www.e-learningforkids.org/>

Resources especially for pre-school children

236 Best Preschool resources & ideas images

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/msgardner/preschool-resources-ideas/>

Little Owl Resources

<https://littleowlsresources.com/>

Free online resources; everything is created completely from scratch by Little Owls Resources husband and wife team.

Resources especially for babies:

25 Things to Do With Babies at Home

<https://www.sitters.co.uk/blog/25-things-to-do-with-babies-at-home.aspx>

Sensory activities for babies and things to do with babies that perhaps you hadn't thought of before.

Stages of Play From Birth to 6 Months: A Full-Body Experience!

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/312-stages-of-play-from-birth-to-6-months-a-full-body-experience>

Activities for Bonding and Learning from Birth to 12 Months

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1077-activities-for-bonding-and-learning-from-birth-to-12-months>

Play Ideas for Newborn Babies:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/play-learning/play-ideas/playing-with-newborns>

Community Support during staying at home

Check local Facebook groups. Many of these are reaching out to everyone offering all sorts of support locally, including dropping food off and people posting up things to do.

Churches can be a great local resource along with your local council – you'll find their phone numbers and websites on google. Most of these have set up volunteer initiatives to support local families.

Domestic Abuse Support

Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid

0808 800 0028

www.bswaid.org

Birmingham Housing Options Hub:

0808 169 9604

Birmingham Council Housing

0121 303 7410 or 0121 303 2296/4806

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk>

Adult Social Care

0121 303 1234 or 0121 675 4806

Children's Social Care

0121 303 1888 or 0121 675 4806