



Parenting during pandemic

Day 16: Worries about the future? What will it be like after lockdown?

Are you worrying about life after lockdown? Lots of parents are. There are lots of potential worries about children's education, work, systems around exam results and further education for young people. The focus on the future in itself has a sense of hopefulness, which can be protective for our mental health. The difficulty that sometimes comes with it is that many of us don't just think about the future or focus on it, we worry about the future. We have talked about the uncertainty around coronavirus and the associated lockdown and said this is difficult for people but if we think about it, there is always an uncertainty about the future. We would doubt that many people thought they'd be in lockdown in the middle of a global pandemic right now!

Worries about the future are often based on predictions we make about the future. Some people take the stance that if they worry about everything then they won't be surprised by what comes. Although we would still doubt that even these people predicted the pandemic and lockdown! We like this quote: "My philosophy is that worrying means you suffer twice" (Newt Scamander in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by J K Rowling). We acknowledge, however, that it's not very easy to actually take this stance, perhaps particularly as a parent.

If you find that you are worried about the future and we think of these worries as predictions we make about the future, then we could go back to our detective strategy from previous blogs and look for evidence about our ability to predict the future. One way to do this is to buy a lottery ticket and for the whole time until the draw, think about winning the main prize. If you don't win, then your powers of prediction aren't that good showing that worries about the future don't change the likelihood of the outcome we actually get. If you do win, then remember who told you to buy that ticket!!!

One way in which we make our predictions about the future more likely to come true is to use our past experiences. For example, you may know that you finish work at 5pm but you predict that you will be home at 5.30pm because that's what usually happens; except on a Friday when traffic is busy so it'll be 5.45pm and so on. If we use our past experiences to

inform our thoughts about the future, then none of us will be very accurate right now because of our lack of experience with pandemic and lockdown.

You are, of course, allowed to have worries about the future but if this is happening a lot and not making you feel good then it may be worth trying to do something more about these worries. You can try re-framing them to acknowledge that they are there but they are just worries and nobody really has all of the answers right now or knows exactly what will happen with the pandemic or lockdown or coming out of both of these things.

If children are worried about the future, whether this is to do with the pandemic or lockdown or school or friends or exam results or anything else, it can be helpful to use reciprocity and let them know that it's ok to be worried about the future and you are a bit worried about it too. From there, move on to talk about what to do when they are worried. You can encourage them to try some breathing and relaxation techniques; or try some distraction; or try some positive self talk; or try some cognitive re-framing. We've talked about these in previous blogs and in our [free guide to managing anxiety during the coronavirus pandemic](#).

One of the things that can be helpful for children if they are worried is to think about who will help them. For example, if they are worried about education then they can think about teachers being helpful around this; if they are worried about friends, they can contact friends. There is an element of trusting the system here in that none of us really know what will happen with education for children and catching up on missed opportunities around learning at this time. While adults may be cynical or sceptical about some of these things, children will tend to be more accepting of the idea of trusting the system because they essentially do this all of the time in that they trust the adults in their lives to look after them and guide them in each environment they are in. As children get older and develop more independence as well as the ability to think in the abstract, this trust in the system may change. So, whereas younger children may accept not going to school and being told they will go back at some point and catch up with things, young people who are awaiting news about exam results and further education may be less accepting of trusting the system. Regardless of their thoughts or worries about it, they are all being asked to trust the system right now so it may be helpful for parents just to be supportive of their concerns.

If you think you are more worried about the future or anything else than others right now, or if your children are particularly worried right now, please use your sources of support and/or [contact us](#).

We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing another day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.



Tomorrow's topic: What to do if you and/or your children are feeling down during the coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdown.

Please [contact us with questions, comments or topics](#) you'd like to see covered. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.