



Parenting during pandemic

Day 17: What to do if you and/or your children are feeling down during the coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdown.

We've talked in other blogs a lot about feeling anxious or stressed during the pandemic but today's focus is on what to do if you and/or your children feel down at this time. There are a number of reasons why we might think that people could feel down right now, such as not getting out so much, not seeing people they want to spend time with, not having so much of their favourite things, watching news that seems negative such as ever increasing death rate numbers on the news. There are a number of other reasons why we can feel down at this time though and at least some of these are biological.

When we are busy and active, we get a release of endorphins in our brains. These are sometimes known as the "happy hormone" because they make us feel happy. Obviously when we don't do so much, we don't get this release of endorphins and with our movement restricted at the moment due to lockdown in the UK, many people are not moving so much and therefore not getting the same release of endorphins and not feeling the associated happy feeling. This is the same for children as it is for adults.

The next difficulty with this is that when we don't do so much, we lose our motivation to do other things, or in some cases almost anything. We get a feeling that we can't be bothered doing things. This can lead us to do less and less over time but biologically, this means less and less endorphins and less and less happy feeling related to the release of endorphins. It can become a downward spiral.

The main way to tackle this is to try to move more. This is the case for both children and adults. At present this may be through exercise at home. At time of writing it is currently allowable to go out to exercise in the day in the UK as long as social distancing is observed and the activity is time limited. There can be added benefits of being outside as we then get some fresh air and sunlight. We are aware that many people are going out into their gardens to achieve this as well.

Another way of managing feeling down is to have a daily activity plan so that we can see that although we may feel we are not achieving a lot at the moment, we are still doing some things. The action of ticking things off of our 'to-do' list can be motivating for us even if we are just ticking off getting up, having meals etc.

People are innately social. It's why very young babies are known to identify and orient to faces at a very early stage. Even when people think of themselves as introverts, they will need some level of social contact. Reduction in our social activities at present can be making lockdown difficult and can contribute to feelings of being quite down at this time. The advice here is simple to be social in any way you can. There are still a number of ways to do this even in lockdown for both children and adults. For example, telephone calls, social media, video calls. You may be limiting 'screen time' so some of this may have to be included within the 'screen time' allocation as this would reinforce the limitations set for this. Breaking your own rules on 'screen time' won't reinforce the limits you have set and may lead to arguments.

The main thing to remember about feeling down is that it can quickly become a downward spiral. The most dangerous part of feeling down can be an associated feeling of hopelessness about the future. If people are feeling like the pandemic and lockdown are endless and they are not motivated to do much during this time, thereby not getting the release of endorphins to feel better and thereby potentially feeling worse over time, there can be a sense of hopelessness. It is really important to take steps to manage this. Try the things we have suggested here but if you are worried about someone, please use supports. You are welcome to contact us to discuss this.

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: Getting closer or needing space? The great things about time together as a family and how to manage the difficulties.

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.