



Parenting during pandemic

Day 31: How do you know if you're coping during the pandemic?

You may have heard people say that it's normal to feel anxious right now due to the pandemic. We are all aware that there is something quite worrying happening and our systems that deal with this are stimulated leaving us with a heightened sense of danger. So, if anxiety is normal right now, how do you know if you are coping?

Psychologists measure how we are all doing in comparison to how others in the same or very similar situations would cope. The situation is important. For example, a doctor is likely to feel stressed if a patient collapses in front of them but feeling stressed at that point is not a mental health difficulty, it's a typical response to the situation. So while coronavirus, social distancing and lockdown may be stressful for us, it is also stressful for other people so our response is similar to others in the same situation.

There are three main things that define whether anxiety is a problem. Firstly, if you feel anxious more often than other people, so more times in the week or more times in the day than others in the same situation. Secondly, if, when you are anxious, you feel more anxious than others in the same situation. Thirdly, if it is stopping you from doing the things you want to be doing. There is also a final factor about the length of time you have been feeling anxious. During the pandemic, we may feel anxious a lot and/or quite intensely at times and we are stopped from using our usual coping strategies like going to visit people or going out somewhere. All of this adds to people feeling more anxious right now but it doesn't mean you are not coping because lots of people are feeling the same in this current situation.

What about children's coping? Again, Psychologists will think about how others in the same situation are coping but this time there is more of an emphasis on the specific age of the "others" we compare to. We always think about children's age and stage of development because it tells us where they are in their ability to understand and process what's going on and in turn this tells us about likely coping strategies. For parents, the main way to know if your child is coping is to look for changes. A child may not be able to say what is upsetting them but if there are changes that mean you know something is different, then this is important. Think about their physical health first, particularly during the pandemic, and



thereafter if you think the change is about anxiety and coping right now, then ask them how they are doing.

We've written other blogs here on childhood developmental stages and how to talk to children about difficulties so it may be helpful to think about these again. Also, we've written about self care for parents and how to manage anxiety during the pandemic so we hope these are helpful.

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

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.