

# Keeping the Learning Going @ Home: Children's wellbeing - a practical guide to talking to your child about their feelings and worries

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In this series, specially written for Independent.ie, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) offers some valuable pointers to parents across a range of different learning areas.



PDST is a Department of Education and Skills support service.

This, the sixth article in the series, is supported by a new online visualisation programme created by the PDST especially for children and provides a unique way for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) to continue at home.

This new resource: 'Breathe', features breathing techniques, activities, and guided visualisations that can be used to support children's emotional wellbeing in the home. It is suitable for all ages, includes audio recordings of the visualisations, and is available to download from the website: <https://www.pdst.ie/primary/healthwellbeing/relaxationandself-regulationtools>



A new online visualisation programme created by the PDST called 'Breathe' The 30 minutes curriculum time our primary school children spend each week with their class teacher and peers, working in the subject of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is invaluable. In this vital space, children learn about themselves, their relationship with others and the wider world, and develop an understanding of the many different feelings and emotions we experience. For children, feelings and emotions can sometimes be heightened, especially in times of crisis.

One of the key *strand units* that teachers consider with their children is 'Taking care of my body' with a particular emphasis on 'health and wellbeing'. Within this key curriculum area, teachers will consider the objectives of the SPHE curriculum such as 'recognising and examining behaviour that is conducive to health and that which is harmful to health' whilst also explicitly and formally teaching them to 'recognise causes of personal worry and identifying appropriate coping strategies'.

The current Covid-19 health crisis is undoubtedly a worrying time for our children of all ages, as it is for everyone, including parents and guardians. Explicitly teaching children to understand and recognise what they can do to protect themselves and everyone around them, for example, regular hand washing, physical distancing and coughing/sneezing etiquette, and by getting them to acknowledge their own worries and anxieties, we can do a great deal to support their physical and mental health.

This type of discussion, at home and when in school can help them feel some degree of reassurance and ease their worries a little. When they know it is ok to acknowledge and accept that they are worried or apprehensive and to name their feelings, especially in times of crisis; this can be a real support to them.

In normal everyday life in classrooms across the country, children will invariably highlight current affairs and world events that have happened, or current crises that may be happening from climate change to war. The teacher, in response, will help navigate this with them, by listening to them and encouraging them to air their own thoughts, feelings and ideas, on a

particular subject. Children will have no end of thoughts and ideas on such subjects.

When the issue is pertinent to their everyday lives, the teacher will also help the children to share their worries and talk about strategies which can help in their self-care and managing their own feelings. This act of acknowledgement and understanding fosters empathy and will often put children at ease. They may also want to know more. As a parent/guardian, having these same type conversations with children about what worries them and our adult acknowledgement that it is ok to not feel ok, can be of huge benefit, and help protect children from increased levels of worry and anxiety.

By trying out different appropriate coping strategies such as the following examples from SPHE lessons, children can also feel supported:

1. Talking to your child: listening to their fears and respecting the feelings they have
2. Using a worry box: naming them and then placing worries in a box each day and closing the lid
3. Keeping a journal: writing thoughts about what is worrying them, followed by a positive thought
4. Writing out the worry, saying it out loud to someone and tearing it up
5. Using visualisation meditations can help children to relax
6. Relaxation activities such as colouring books, music, modelling clay, stress ball
7. Teaching children about the importance of breath.
8. Muscle relaxation: tensing a specific muscle group, for example, arms/shoulders, hold, and then release.

In previous weeks, the PDST shared tips on how to make the most out of reading time, how to support children in developing digital storytelling, how to keep happy, healthy and learning movement skills , how to measure a minute and how to make the best use of digital libraries.

## Read More

- [Keeping the Learning Going At Home: Digital Libraries - Bringing your local library home](#)
- [Keeping the Learning Going At Home: Measuring a minute](#)
- [Keeping the Learning Going At Home: How to keep children happy, healthy and learning movement skills while schools are closed](#)

- [Keeping the learning going at home: digital storytelling tips for parents amid school shutdown](#)
- [Keeping the learning going at home: how to make the most out of reading time](#)

