

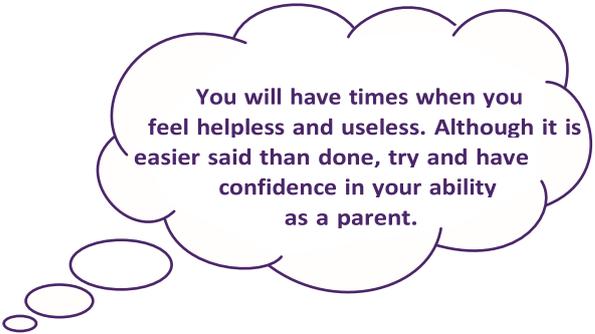
CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING CONTINUED

Following on from article one it is important to understand what children and young people may be experiencing as a result of their significant change in how they do life. Young children will be gradually realising that life is different, while older children and young people will no longer begin to experience frustration with their restrictions. For both young children and older children common symptoms may begin to appear such as:

- Anxiety and fear including separation anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Anger and attention-demanding behaviours
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Sadness and sense of loss
- Guilt and self-condemnation
- Play out scenarios connected to the current situation or make up imaginary situations
- Thoughts about meaning and who they are – identity
- More childish behaviours
- Disturbing fantasies

Young children will need an explanation for the change frequently repeated for them to understand and accept the situation. However, for all age groups of children careful management of routines will help to reaffirm security in their lives and stabilise their behaviours.

If boundaries are changed it is best to avoid making decisions at the height of an argument or in anger. The message about new rules may be lost as one or both of you struggle to keep control of your emotions.



You will have times when you feel helpless and useless. Although it is easier said than done, try and have confidence in your ability as a parent.

Do not make unrealistic rules. Make a few rules and stick to them

As your child grows and develops there will be decisions to be made about changes in boundaries. Talking to your child about why new boundaries are planned will help them co-operate more readily.

Difficult behaviour usually has a meaning, even though sometimes it is not clear what the meaning is. You may need to keep an open mind for a while about what is causing the difficulty. Your child may have little idea about why he/she is getting cross or upset and behaving in the way he/she is.

You will need to decide what you think is acceptable behaviour, so that if other people criticise you for your child's behaviour, you will be more sure of your ground.

**Share
one-to-one
time with your
child**

Sharing time with your child to help develop a positive relationship is important. Within a family children may have different individual needs. This may include giving different age appropriate bedtimes and different boundaries and routines.



It may be useful to spend some time thinking about the way you will manage routines and boundaries under the new conditions in which we have to live currently. You may choose to discuss this with your partner and family members.

**Think about
the things that
shape you as
a parent**

Each parent or carers' experience of being parented as a child themselves may be different and can raise difficult issues for some couples who may feel they want to parent their own children differently. Children can feel confused by receiving different messages from adults in their lives, so it is really useful to think about how you would like to be as a parent at the moment.



