

**CORONAVIRUS
THE IMPORTANCE
OF MAINTAINING
STRUCTURE IN
OUR LIVES**

Dear parent/carer

Children need structure, routine and to have a sense of a predictable day.

A structured day is vital for children's well-being as it provides them with a sense of purpose, direction, familiarity and routine. Attending school provides children with that structure. From getting ready at home in the morning, to following their daily timetable, children are generally sure of how their day will unfold. Yes, there are odd occasions when the routine changes, e.g. snowy days, school trips and teacher training days. However, on the whole, school is pretty predictable, wherein children find opportunities to be successful, connect, push boundaries and accomplish things, all of which helps to build both their self-esteem and individual characters.

With schools temporarily closed that all-important structure, which usually takes centre stage in our families' lives, has all but disappeared. The timing of the closure has not been ideal. Closing just before the Easter break may have given us the impression that the lockdown would simply be an extension to the holiday we were about to have. Therefore, the more relaxed, holiday rules would apply, i.e. staying up all night, sleeping through the day, watching too much TV and gaming 24/7.

This is different, as this time we don't quite know when we will be returning to our structured lives. It could be weeks or even months. If the summer holidays are anything to go by, most children are craving the school structure after around four weeks. There may therefore be plenty of time for bad habits to form and that all important sense of purpose to disappear, unless we formulate our own healthy structure to follow. Maintaining a structured life is vital if we are to get through this difficult time. Structure will ensure we have enough energy and resilience to tackle the challenges of the future, after the epidemic.

In this document, you will find tips on how to keep structure in yours and your children's life. If you are looking to priorities what is most important, Unravel will always suggest that you focus on maintaining a health sleeping pattern, as poor sleep can have a direct and dramatic effect on our mental health and resilience to cope with adverse situations.

Please remember, these are extraordinary times. We're not looking for perfection and normality, just enough structure to get us through. Be kind to yourself, you are doing your best.

Take care.

The Unravel Team

The logo for Unravel, featuring the word "unravel" in a lowercase, rounded, teal-colored font.

Experts in children & young people's
emotional well-being

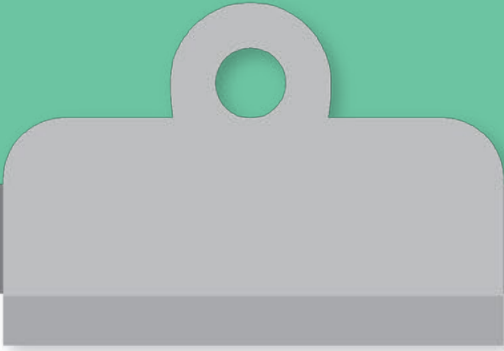
Supporting you on behalf of your child's school



MAINTAINING STRUCTURED LIVES: WHOLE FAMILY

- ✔ Wake up at the same time every day and go through a similar routine of getting dressed, getting ready and having breakfast, as a beginning to the day. The goal is to keep things as normal as possible so things can be a bit more relaxed at the weekends
- ✔ Eat meals together and stick to a regular mealtime routine. Use this time to talk, reflect and plan
- ✔ Planning is important. Spend some time talking to your children about possible activities they will enjoy before they get bored. Create a bank of activities that vary in content, purpose and outcome
- ✔ Try to include activities which include learning, play, reading, creativity, fun, exploration and physical activities. With a plan, you can begin to gather resources to help with those activities. Once you have an idea of what your children can do, produce a visual timetable with them so they know what they are doing and when they are doing it
- ✔ Your children's school will have supplied a home learning pack or some means of accessing online learning. Schedule time into every weekday to complete this work, even if it's just a couple of hours a day.
- ✔ If your young children say they are bored, they are simply asking for guidance and don't mean to annoy you. Try to gently encourage your children to find their own solutions to their boredom before you jump in with suggestions



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- ✔ Lockdown will inevitably present numerous challenges for family life. It is worth considering that this is also a unique opportunity to bond as a family without life's responsibilities getting in the way
 - ✔ Give each other space
 - ✔ We're all in this for the first time and we're all learning. Be kind, and forgive yourself and others if mistakes are made.

MAINTAINING STRUCTURED LIVES: YOUNG CHILDREN

- ✔ Outside play is essential for young children's development and well-being. Schedule outside play in their daily routine. If possible, take your child to the park, although if advice suggests that this is no longer possible, explore the garden or any nearby outside space where contact with others is limited
- ✔ Dig out old toys and games. Playing with these could bring on familiar, positive feelings from less stressful times
- ✔ Keep activities fairly short before introducing something different. Young children don't always know when they've had enough, which can lead to frustration. This is why the school day is divided into blocks
- ✔ Have them join you doing the housework. They will feel like they are helping in some way
- ✔ Fully immerse yourself in your child's activity. Be a child again. It will be deeply beneficial to you both.





MAINTAINING STRUCTURED LIVES: TEENAGERS

- ✔ Use this as an opportunity for your teenagers to learn life skills such as cooking, cleaning, ironing and DIY jobs
- ✔ Allow for some screen time, although too much time spent on smart devices, watching TV and gaming is likely to result in moody behaviour
- ✔ Use screen time as a bargaining tool to ensure your teenager engages with other things, from schoolwork to housework. Avoid taking away their only means of connecting with their friends completely. Connecting to friends is vital to their emotional well-being
- ✔ While most teenagers complain about school, most secretly recognise that it's the most important aspect of their lives outside the family unit. This is because for most, but not all, it provides them with their biggest source of the very thing the teenage brain craves: social interaction. Encourage your teenager to stay connected with friends during the lockdown period. At the moment, this is likely to be through smart devices due to social distancing requirements. Encourage your teenager to use apps that allow them to see the person they are talking to, as this will help them feel connected
- ✔ If your child struggles to stick to a reasonable sleep pattern and you are finding that they are awake all night and sleeping all day, remember, your Wi-Fi can be switched off at night. If you feel you need to do this, talk to them and warn them first, to avoid confrontation. Your teenager needs to know what the boundaries are and the consequences. They also need to be given the opportunity to prove they can be responsible.



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**TOGETHER WE CAN
BEAT IT**

**Please keep yourselves
and your children safe**

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