

Creating a sense of safety

It's completely normal and understandable if children and adults are feeling unsafe at the moment.

Here are some ideas to try at home:

1. A predictable day

Having a strong routine can help make the day feel safe and predictable. Start with your anchors- the things that always happen, like breakfast, lunch and tea. Then choose two or three big rocks- the things that have to happen, like going outside, and reading together. Fit other things around these big rocks. Use visual support to show your child what will happen. Be gentle with yourself- sometimes, with all our best efforts, our days don't go the way we planned.

2. Talk about safety

Let your child know that they can trust the adults to keep them safe. Say "In our family, we stay safe by...", naming all the things you do. Rather than talking about risk and danger, try to talk about safety: "Schools are opening, but we can't go every day, so that everyone is safe."

3. Talk about what's happening

Some families haven't talked to their children about the pandemic because they don't want to frighten them. But our children will probably be picking up that life is very different and quite scary at the moment, so explaining this properly can make things *less* frightening. There are lots of good social stories and children's books and videos explaining coronavirus, social distancing and handwashing.

4. Hand of safety

Draw around your child's hand. Think of five safe people who can help and support them. Write the name of each person along each finger of the drawing. Think together about how your child can ask them for help or support when they need it.

5. Safe retreat

Help your child to create a 'safe' or 'happy' place in their minds, which they can go to when they feel worried or stressed. They might use their imagination or memories, or a picture or photograph. You could also create a physical safe retreat for your child, using lighting, textures, sounds and scents.