

SEMH Team Newsletter



Newsletter No 5.



Up's and Downs of Family Life

Hello again! Being in lockdown with our families can undoubtedly have it's ups and downs. It can be pleasurable, but it can also become challenging due to limited space and the lack of opportunities to have time away from each other. This can lead to conflict, which feels worse because we have limited places where we can escape to calm down. With this in mind, we have put together some ideas to support family dynamics which may be helpful.



What to Say to an Angry Child or Teen.

Before you say anything, think about your body language. This should be relaxed, so drop your shoulders, and unfold your arms. Keep your voice calm and quiet, or slightly quieter than the person you are talking to. Then you can lower your volume further when they start to match you.

"I love you and we can sort this out."

"I can see you're angry and it's okay."

"I'm sure we can find a solution together".

"I'll be here when you're ready."

"I can see that you are upset."

"It's not okay to..."

"Can we start again...?"

"You are safe."



Restorative Questions After Family Conflicts

A restorative approach focuses on relationships and repairing of harm rather than punishing inappropriate behaviours. If we ask questions that encourage our children to reflect on their behaviour and the impact they have had on others, we teach them how to resolve issues and 'put things right' so that everybody feels O.K. and can move on.

"What were you feeling when it happened? How do you feel now?"

"How did doing that hurt your brother/sister?"

"What were you wanting and needing when you did that?"

"What will you do differently next time?"

"What was your brain saying? What were you thinking?"

"How can you put this right?"

"What will you do to fix this and make it better?"

Often conflicts happen with children because they are feeling anxious or worried about something, but don't quite have the skills or maturity to express this. Here are some activities to do with your Child or Teenager.

Worry time



Set aside a specific, limited amount of time each day to either discuss their worries or better still to problem-solve them, in order to overcome them. Then do something else!

Activity planning

Talk about activities your child wants to do during the day and help them to schedule them in. This may help anxious children and young people as it provides structure.

Being 'Present'

Help your child to be 'present' and to live in the moment. Go for a walk and see how many different things you can notice using all five of the senses—touch, taste, sight, hearing and smell.

Thought challenging

Help your child to write down any thoughts they are having. Then think about whether they are helpful thoughts or unhelpful thoughts. Reassure them that we all have unhelpful thoughts at times, but it's a good idea to try to turn them into more helpful ones, as that helps us to feel better.

E.g. an unhelpful thought—"I'm sick of lockdown!"

A helpful thought—"One day lockdown will end and then I'm going to..."

Imagery

Support your child to imagine themselves in an imaginary future, where everything has worked out in a positive way, i.e. "Life after lockdown! What will be different, what will you do, see, hear and feel?"



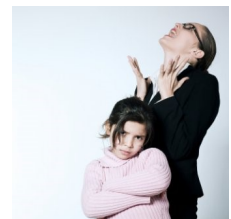
Try saying this..

'I am going to...' When your child is screaming at you or stomping, they are often looking for your reaction. Staying calm and collected is essential. However, letting your child know your moves and plans is also key in letting them know what is coming next, i.e. *"I am going to wait over here until you are ready." "I am going to move closer to you, so you know where I am." "I am going to wait out in the hall until you finish screaming."*



Or this..

'Would you like to try....' While this is not the time to rationalise with your child, it is okay to offer your help. Often, a child is expressing extreme anger because they don't know how to self-regulate. You can offer many calming strategies, or suggestions for help. Start by suggesting only one and then waiting before speaking again, i.e. 'Would you like to punch a pillow?'



Teach Your Children or Teens What to Say to Each Other in an Argument.

Instead of "Stop, Go away!" say "When you do it makes me feel..." or "Can you give me some space, thank you!"

Instead of "Don't touch my stuff," say, "I'm worried you might break it."

Instead of "Give me that!" say, "I was using that, but you can have it..." or "Will you show me how to..."

Instead of "Ha, ha, I won!," say "Good game, can we play again?" "That was fun!"

"I like that game."

Family Time

Try putting aside some time each day or week for Family Time! This is especially useful if you have teens who have taken up residence in their bedrooms. Take it in turns to choose a fun activity for the whole family to join in. This could be anything from playing games, to a family makeover, or something that your child / teen is interested in. **Remember, a board game is for life.. not just for Christmas!**

Game Time

Beach Ball Name Game

Game Time

A sponge or small ball is passed from person to person, but the passer must say the catcher's name before passing. To make it more difficult, describe something about the person to identify them instead.

Each time the game is played the group could try giving different descriptions of each person: the type of hair; colour of hair; description of clothes or shoes; favourite things to do; favourite foods (these two would have to have been discussed at a previous time).

For older groups, pass an imaginary ball that everyone can change into whatever they like (watermelon, fish, TV, teacher, etc.) Compare the way the imaginary item is thrown and how it is caught: do they match up? (Orlick, 1982, pg. 59)

Partner Stand-Ups and Sit-Downs

Partners sit on the floor, hold hands, and touch toes together. Then someone (one of them or the whole group watching) counts "1-2-3-Go!" On "Go," the partners pull up and stand at the same time, so that neither falls and both are pulled up. Cooperation and trust are necessary to be successful in this! The activity can be reversed by beginning in a standing position while touching toes and holding hands and then sitting down on the count of '1-2-3 Go!'. For older groups that have been successful in pairs, challenge them by trying a 3 person stand-up. **Key:** Toes together, simultaneous balance and cooperative pulling up. Also, older kids can try stand-ups with backs together and elbows linked! How many people can stand up together in your group? (Orlick, 1978, pg. 31)

Balloon Balance Partners must balance a balloon, beach ball or foam ball between them without using their hands and while walking, try using stomachs, upper arms, foreheads, backs, chins.

Sophisticated groups can try with more people or more balloons or both! Hard, fun but can get wild. Keep calm! (Orlick, 1978, pg. 17)



Useful links

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/behaviour/dealing-with-anger-in-teenagers/>

<https://www.home-start.org.uk/advice-for-parenting-teens-during-covid-19> <https://www.acefitness.org/education-and-resources/lifestyle/blog/7538/family-fitness-during-covid-19/>



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