

YOUNG CARERS COVID-19 CRISIS

Hints and Tips for Help and Support

As social distancing measures continue, young carers are at home with the person they care for all day, everyday in isolation, with limited support from professionals and extended family. Without this support, young carers may feel very isolated. We know that young carers are at heightened risk of developing mental and/or physical health issues.

The following list of hints and tips includes simple things that could make a positive change to their experience of this challenging time.

FAMILY NEEDS

Lightening the load on a young carer:

- Consider making a referral to VODA's Good Neighbours project for families with limited support for help with medication, shopping, gas and electricity.
- Contact volunteer responders who support vulnerable or at risk people needing help with shopping, medication or other essential supplies. Carers can make a referral for someone they care for or make a referral for themselves if the support helps them to continue their caring role.
- If they're collecting medication, can this be arranged to be delivered via their GP surgery?
- If shopping for their family, can you arrange for them to attend 'priority shopping' sessions? North Tyneside Carers' Centre are working closely with North Tyneside Council and local MP's to enable young carers to attend 'priority shopping sessions'. For current applicable stores please visit our website.
- Are there online learning opportunities that can help them improve their understanding of the 'cared for condition'? Learning Curve has a selection of free courses that may be relevant.
- Does it seem like they are offering a lot more emotional support to the person they care for than normal? Are there any online support groups that the cared for person can access?

CONNECT AND COMMUNICATE

Things to consider to help

young carers connect with others and communicate with the outside world:

- Do they have internet access? If not, can you arrange delivery of a dongle?
- Do they need a laptop to access school work? Can school loan a laptop?
- Do they have apps that enable free contact with friends? Can you suggest some and advise them how to install them?
- Do they have phone credits to make emergency calls?
- Are they maintaining contact with any extra-curricular groups they usually attend eg. Scouts & Brownies, young carers etc online? Do they know how to access any of these groups that have gone virtual? Do they or their parents need help to make this possible?



INFORMATION

It's important that young people and their families have access to good, reliable information to help them understand what is happening:

- The Children's Commissioner 's guide to coronavirus for children is available via: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childrens-guide-to-coronavirus/
- The NSPCC's guide to talking to children who worried about coronavirus is available via: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/depression-anxiety-mental-health/>
- Mental health charity MIND have recently published advice and guidance about anxiety and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic via: <https://www.mind.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ResponseCoronavirusENG6.2.2020-.pdf>

AVAILABLE SUPPORT

- Help them to remember that their social workers, therapists, teachers and doctors are still there and they can still reach them.
- If someone in their home is having a mental health emergency, advise them to call 999 or the Mental Health Crisis Service on 0303 123 1146.
- Kooth: For free, safe and anonymous support: <https://www.kooth.com/>.
- Princes Trust: To access support from their team of youth workers and volunteers and to access their coronavirus support hub: five-point Youth Action Plan.
- <https://www.meetwo.co.uk/> - An app which is anonymous and promotes talking about difficult things.
- Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/>.



EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

A caring role can have a significant impact on a young person's emotional wellbeing. As well as the outside help listed above, you could make some of the following suggestions to help the young person to help themselves:

- Establish what they're worrying about, offer reliable information and reassurance.
- Encourage them to have routines in their day.
- Encourage regular, virtual contact with friends.
- Suggest meditation/mindfulness podcasts.
- Suggest yoga, stretching and breathing exercises.
- Remind them to take a break/have a nap.
- Help them to understand that crying is OK and can be cathartic.
- Help them to practice gratitude and positivity.

- Suggest they have a bubble bath/spa session, massage, eye mask, beauty treatments.
- Encourage them to use positive affirmations.
- Encourage them to de-clutter/clean/organise bedroom.
- Suggest they listen to music that their younger self liked.
- Help them to pay attention to nature, for example, listen to the birds.
- Provide them with basic supplies for journaling/ scrapbooking/ collages to record experiences of lockdown.
- Encourage them to write a song/story/poem.



PHYSICAL WELLBEING

**A caring role can impact a young person's physical health –
check in with them about the following:**

- Are they sleeping OK?
- Are they drinking water?
- Are they able to eat regularly and healthily?
- Are they able to get exercise*?
- Are they getting outdoors?
- Do they have ideas for things that can keep them physically active? Can you suggest some ideas, like ball challenges/ cycling/ skateboarding/ roller-skating?
- Have they taken on any physical lifting/ manual handling? Are they having any physical pain because of this? (this may require an Adult Social Care Assessment).

**Do they know that they can leave the house more than once a day now for the purpose of exercise, as long as they are continuing to follow social distancing rules? Does this feel possible for them alongside their caring role - if not, could you talk to parents/ carers to help them to negotiate this?*

RESPIRE AND RECREATION

Young carers really need a break from their caring role. With limited opportunities to leave the house, here are some suggestions you could offer to

them:

- Have they got access to a quiet place to relax? Can they negotiate this with the rest of the family?
- Do they have basic art supplies, paper, pencils, pens, etc?
- Recommend interesting podcasts for them to listen to.
- Recommend mood boosting books - Reading Well suggest a wide variety of titles suitable for different age groups via <https://reading-well.org.uk/books/mood-boosting-books>.
- Suggest a playlist for 'dance like there's no-one watching' session.
- Suggest a joke of the day (check out: <https://www.wickeduncle.co.uk/jokes/>).
- Suggest they build a den or playhouse.
- Suggest they have an 'inside' picnic.
- Encourage playing board-games.
- Suggest cooking and baking.
- Suggest craft sessions, e.g. build a statue, build a space rocket from household recycling objects.
- Have they got colouring books, chalk to draw in outside spaces, jigsaw puzzles, activity books?
- Encourage them to observe/record nature, building 'bug hotels'?
- Suggest a treasure hunt inside or on their exercise route.
- Suggest a show to watch online.
- Suggest a virtual museum tour and pretend to travel the world.
- Suggest live reading aloud by children's authors.



USEFUL RESOURCES

- VODA's Good Neighbours Project: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ZjZ1mSCrQUK8OXxe_EjLV18JDtKKv6ILtJGxDDk8a3VUOVNERzRIRTINWUw5UFVZTUQyQ1IZTkdWOC4u
- Volunteer Responders: call 08081963646 between 8am – 8pm or visit <https://volunteering.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/nhs-volunteer-responders>
- Courses that may help young carers: <https://www.learningcurvegroup.co.uk/>
- Podcasts: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts?q=children>
- Jokes: <https://www.wickeduncle.co.uk/jokes/>
- Cooking and Baking: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-5-easy-bakes-kids>
- Meditation Resources: <https://bedtime.fm/peaceout>, <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>, <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/guided-meditations/>
- Dream Big, presented by 10 year old Eva Karpman has a selection of episodes made specifically for lockdown, including one on how to deal with your annoying siblings!
- Goodnight Stories For Rebel Girls – A podcast about extraordinary women who inspire us. For more: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts?q=children>
- Recipes resources: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-5-easy-bakes-kids>
- Museums Online: <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
- Online theatre: https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/wind-in-the-willows-coronavirus-stream-free_51205.html?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=17march2020
- Live readings from children's authors: https://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-author-activities/?utm_content=1584565321&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3nZU9g7n-fh0cNEYrL2PuumzEh_f3g-3aSS7mdYqwkGFZAjVofUNwQuZc

FURTHER SUPPORT:

Follow North Tyneside Young Carers' on twitter for more help and suggestions, or contact Anne Longstaff, Young Carers' Link Worker for more help and support.

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Follow: @carers_north