

# Gaddum ...Therapy

## Hi, I'm Gaddum.

## Let's talk about what's going on.

Whilst the below is advice on how to cope during this difficult time, please make sure that you're following the advice from HM Government. You can read the latest information at: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Here are some ideas of what might help your family adjust to the current situation...

### **Environment.**

Try to promote a calm space at home to balance the general anxiety around. This is a hard one, as families face financial difficulties and relationships may be strained. Talk about adult concerns in adult time, for example, when the children are asleep.

### **Develop Routines.**

It is easy to let routines of time slide, but try to maintain normal bedtimes, getting up times, mealtimes in order to get some structure to the days.

### **Maintain Boundaries.**

When people are on top of each other tempers can be frayed. Try to maintain some boundaries of space and time. E.g. if children share a bedroom, allocate some personal alone time for each one if they need it. Try not to let your children get away with things they would normally be in trouble for. Boundaries help children to feel safe.

### **Exercise.**

One of the things that support our emotional and mental well-being is connections – with sensory experiences, people, the outdoors. Use your one outing a day to get out and burn off some energy – and boredom! There are also on-line exercise classes for kids e.g. Joe Wicks is putting a half hour exercise class on at 9.00 a.m. each day, children from all over the world are connecting this way. For older children, get them climbing mount Everest with a group of their mates and see how long it will take them collectively – they can do this by going up and down the stairs. Tip: 52,047 steps are equivalent to climbing Everest...

**Stay connected.**

The wonderful thing about these days of technology is the ability to stay connected even when physically distanced. Use the variety of free ways to connect with people who are significant to you e.g. WhatsApp video, Zoom.

**Variety is the spice of life.**

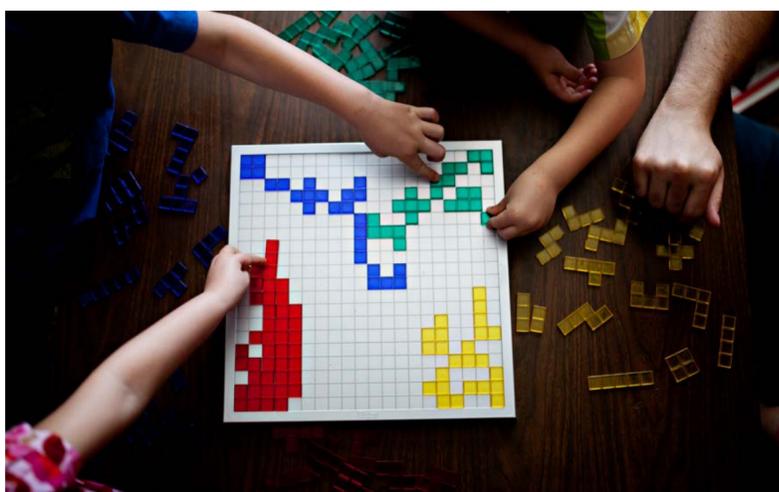
Try to think of creative ways of passing the time - family games, walks (once a day!), arts and crafts, baking etc...

**Use Humour.**

Things at the moment can feel pretty intense - don't forget that its ok to laugh! Humour is good for the soul and is a good balancer.

**Embrace this time!**

What other chance do you get to spend this much time at home with your family? What changes has this made to your life for the better? We can't change the fact that we're in lockdown, but we can change how we feel about it.



# How to talk to Children and Young People about Coronavirus...

This is a time of high anxiety for all of us and some unprecedented decisions have been made so it is a learning curve for us all. Children who have been bereaved in sudden and unexpected ways in the past may have a higher state of anxiety because of this experience, and it is important to help your child to regulate their levels of anxiety. Here are some suggestions about how you might do this...

**Hospital policy.** Local hospitals may have different procedures in place regarding contact with patients - e.g. some are allowing video messages to be shown to the patients. Find out from your local hospital what their policy and protocol is and be guided by this.



**Age appropriate honesty.**



**Balance.**

**At Gaddum we always promote age appropriate honesty when talking to children about serious illness and death.**

**What we mean by this is:-**

- Use simple, direct language and try to avoid euphemisms, such as passed away or lost.
- Give only the information that the child is able to understand, based on their level of cognition.
- Be honest – even when honesty means telling them that you aren't sure how to answer a question "I'm not sure about the answer to that question, but I can write it down in our little book and I will give it some thought/try to find out and get back to you.
- Provide information in a balanced way. There is so much coverage about Coronavirus, try to maintain some perspective. Most people who contract Coronavirus will only get mild symptoms and will get better, some will get more serious symptoms and will get better and a smaller number of these will die. Get them researching the population numbers of the UK etc. to create a realistic number of population affected.
- Limit the level of exposure to news about Coronavirus. Have it on the agenda, but not as the only item!
- Make sure that information is coming from a trusted source.
- Reassure that although this is a new virus, Doctors from all around the world are working together on it so that it can be controlled as soon as possible.

**Normalise feelings.**



- Listen to any anxieties that your child might have and accept them as this will keep lines of communication open and avoid ‘the elephant in the room’
- Advise children on how they can keep themselves safe “Yes it is quite scary but these are the things we can do to protect ourselves” - wash our hands, stay at home, only speak to family and friends via media. Maybe you could develop a family song/rap/verse etc that you can wash your hands to!

**Summarise.**



- For younger children, give information in small bursts. e.g. “Grandad is very ill with the Coronavirus and we don’t know if he is going to get better or not, but the Doctors are doing everything that they can to help him”.
- Summarise what has been said.
- Check out their understanding about what has been said.
- Let them know that they can come back at any time for further clarification.

# Telling Children and Young People that someone significant to them has died...

Again, use clear and simple language that is appropriate to your child's age and cognitive understanding. Keep lines of communication open and be prepared for lots of questions. Be honest in your replies - even if this means saying that you don't know but will try to find out.

Let children know that most people die when they are older - 80 or 90 ... (Sometimes even 100+ these days!) but that sometimes serious illness can mean that this happens sooner and that's what happened to Grandad. "Remember I told you that he was very ill because of the Coronavirus, well even though the doctors tried their best to make him better, he was too ill and he died". There are several books that can help e.g. "beginning and endings with lifetimes in between".

**“Remember when I told you that Grandad was very ill because of the Coronavirus - well, even though the doctors tried their best to make him better, he was too ill and he died”**

**“Aunty Rachel was very unwell because of Coronavirus - the doctors tried to make her better, but she was too ill and she has died”**

# Saying Goodbye...

Culturally, we are so much better at supporting children with ritualising death. Unfortunately, some of these supportive rituals are not available to us with Coronavirus - Children will not be able to visit sick relatives in hospital. Children will not have the choice of viewing the body to say Goodbye. Children will not be allowed to attend the funeral or place a precious item in the coffin - so we need to think creatively about how children can be included.

**Talk to your funeral director, who will guide you through the service. You could ask if it's possible for the funeral to be live streamed - perhaps somebody present could record it for later.**

**Can your child write something that can be read on their behalf at the funeral?**

**Can your child choose any music to be played?**

**If your children can't attend the funeral, maybe you could get creative and have your own personal Goodbye ritual e.g. in the garden at the same time as the funeral?**

**Tell stories about the person who died that represents the child's relationship with them. This will be helpful for the future if you decide to create a memory box!**

**Play "if I had 5 more minutes" with them.... what would you say?**

## **Normalise all feelings about the person...**

- Although even young children grieve, they do it differently to adults and may bounce between their emotions quickly. For children, emotions aren't so all consuming, and this is normal. Try to sit with all of their changing emotions and keep lines of communication open.
- It's ok to feel sad - what's important is that we get those uncomfortable feelings inside, out. Here's how we can do it.... Cry, write about it, tell someone etc...
- It's understandable that you feel angry, I'm angry too! It's important that we don't ignore our anger or it will get bigger and more difficult to manage. Here's how we can look after it.... Anger is energetic, so kick a ball in the garden, get in the shower and shout, punch a pillow, scribble energetically in red ink on a piece of paper, and it's important to talk about it.
- It's ok to laugh when we remember funny things about the person who died. This is remembering the whole of them, not just the death.

# Recommended Booklist...

Books are a very personal thing and when selecting the right one for your child it is important to consider not only a child's chronological age but also their level of understanding.

You may already have books at home that cover the relevant issues, but below is a list of books that may also be helpful. Gaddum has intentionally not put recommended ages on the books as you will decide which ones are appropriate for your child.

## For younger children:

1. What Does Dead Mean? A Book for Young Children to Help Explain Death and Dying - Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas.
2. The Invisible String - Patrice Karst.
3. Beginnings and endings with LIFETIMES in between - Bryan Mellorie
4. Always and Forever - Debi Gliori and Alan Devant.
5. No Matter What - Debi Gliori
6. I Miss You. A first look at Death. - Pat Thomas
7. Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine. - Winstons Wish
8. The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back – Margot Sutherland and Nicky Armstrong
9. Goodbye Mog - Judith Kerr
10. I'll Always Love You - Hans Wilhelm
11. When Dinosaurs Die. A Guide to Understanding Death - Laura Kransy Brown and Marc Brown.
12. The Huge Bag of Worries - Virginia Ironside
13. Not A Worry In The World - Marcia Williams
14. Badgers Parting Gift - Susan Varley
15. The Next Place - Warren Hanson
16. In My Heart. A Book of Feelings - Jo Witek
17. The Velveteen Rabbit - Margery Williams



# Recommended Booklist...

**For older children/young people:**

1. The Sad Book - Michael Rosen.
2. A Monster Calls - Patrick Ness
3. Duck, Death and Tulip - Wolf Erlbruch.
4. Vicky Angel - Jacqueline Wilson
5. Bridge to Terabithia - Katherine Paterson
6. Goodnight Mr Tom, - Michelle Magorian
7. The Secret Garden - Frances Hodgson Burnett
8. The Lost Boys Appreciation Society. - Alan Gibbons.

**These lists are not exhaustive, so research and find the right one for your child and which will address the right issue.**

**You can telephone or email us for advice and guidance if you are worried about any aspect of your child's behaviour. Our details are on the bottom of this page.  
From all of us at Gaddum, please take care and stay safe.**

