



Suggestions for Parents

With schools being closed until further notice, quite possibly until September, it will make a huge difference if parents and carers plan for what now may be some 5½ months of separation from school. Self-isolation will be a challenge for any household. However, it *can* also be a time when families learn to appreciate one-another much more and make new discoveries even though we feel confined to our homes.

What follows below is a detailed list of suggestions for your reference in due course:

- Priority 1: Connecting and establishing new routines
- Priority 2: Getting online and onto Office 365 Teams
- Priority 3: Wellbeing
- Priority 4: Learning from Home

Please be assured that we will be in regular contact to support you and we are available to take phone calls during office hours just call 0191 442 2000 and select the most appropriate option or email enquiries@gracecollege.org.uk

Priority 1: Connecting and establishing new routines

This week the priority is to be connected to loved ones. Plan time around rest, time to 'sing' and enjoy the many good things around us and time to setup new rhythms. We suggest taking part in online exercise and singing. As humans we feel our best when we have had a chance to exercise a little and our whole body, mind and soul feels deeply connected when we sing.

The situation will weigh heavily on many. We understand this and would like to offer any student and/or parent the opportunity to speak to a pastoral lead assigned to their year group. To get in touch, please phone 0191 442 2000 and select the appropriate number option for the year group you require.

Priority 2: Getting online and onto Office 365 Teams

The second big help this week will to be connected as the Grace College community we need to try to get or keep the following communication channels open:

- A. Parents to link with us on Twitter @GraceCollegeESF
- B. Students to link with their teachers on Office 365 and the app Teams
- C. Students to connect with their tutors and tutees, also through Teams
- D. Pastoral staff may be in touch via an online survey or by phone

Priority 3: Wellbeing

The current situation that we find ourselves in as individuals, as families, and as a community is certainly unique. Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for adults and children alike. It is extremely important for us to consider not only our physical health but our mental health during these challenging and uncertain times. It is perfectly normal to feel stressed, worried or anxious when faced with new and uncertain situations such as this and it is important for us to acknowledge this to take care of our mental health and wellbeing. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian Neurologist and Holocaust survivor once said, 'Everything can be taken from man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.' By taking steps to care for our mental wellbeing, we are in the best position to take the right attitude which will equip us for dealing with such unprecedented times.

How can you look after yourself in the current situation?

It is vitally important to remember that looking after your own mental health will put you in the best position to look after your children. Just like when you are on an aeroplane and you are told to put your oxygen mask on before helping others, without taking care of your own mental health you will be unable to assist others effectively.

The New Economic Forum recommends '5 ways to wellbeing' which are outlined below.

Step 1: Be Active

Regular exercise is a great way to maintain positive mental health. Maybe take a home workout each day with your family, some links to excellent workouts are available below. Try to use your opportunity to get outside by taking the daily walk, run or cycle that are currently permitted under government guidelines. If going outside is not an option, perhaps you could open the windows, take some time to look and listen to the world outside. As the traffic sounds become more muted it is lovely to hear the birds sing.

Step 2: Take notice

It is easy to become obsessed with the current news and media, often this serves to heighten anxiety. Take some time each day to take a break from news and social media and spend some time with your family. Maybe try some mindfulness activities together, there are some great apps available to support this, or maybe even spend some time drawing, crafting or doing something else you like that you would normally not have time for.

Step 3: Connect

Social connection is one of the most important contributing factors to positive mental health. Try to think of our current situation as 'physical distancing' as opposed to 'social distancing' and use technology to reach out to those around you who you cannot physically be with. There are many great video conferencing options, FaceTime, video calling through WhatsApp or messenger, or Zoom meetings where you get to see lots of people at the same time.

Step 4: Give

Research suggests that giving to our community increases feelings of value and therefore happiness. At the current time, we may not be able to give to our community in the same way that we normally do, but there are other things that we can do to help. You can offer support to friends or family by a simple phone call to check in on them, or maybe join some of the mutual aid groups in your local area to see how you can help, a phone call to an elderly neighbour or dropping off some essential supplies when in a position to do so are great ways to help out.

Step 5: Keep learning

Learning gives us a sense of purpose and achievement. Is there something you have always wanted to do or get better at? Now is the time. Take some time out for yourself to learn. Learning also helps to take our minds off things, this will reduce anxiety. Check out some of the links in the **Learning from home** section below, many of these learning opportunities are suitable for adults too.

How can you support your child's mental wellbeing in the current situation?

For the most part, children will need what they have always needed: love, attention and opportunities to learn.

The following tips will help to maintain positive mental health as young people try to navigate this new situation:

- Try to keep to a structure and routine that suits you and your family. Keep bedtime routines as normal as possible and encourage children to get up and dressed each morning.
- Keep boundaries firm and make it clear that behaviour expectations are the same as they always have been. Boundaries will give children a sense of grounding, making them feel safe as they have the understanding that those who care for them are still in control of the situation.
- Expect your children to do some learning every day, following a timetable such as the one provided below will be helpful to maintaining a sense of normality and routine. Find opportunities for your children to interact with their peers. In the same way that adults may benefit from thinking about 'physical distancing' as opposed to 'social distancing' children will too. Please be mindful of the platforms your children are using to communicate with their peers and keep access to these supervised.
- Give children an opportunity to have a say. Family meetings are a good opportunity to allow children to feel involved, they may currently feel angry or confused about these changes, so by having a voice they are more likely to be willing to adapt to new rules you need to put in place within the household.

How do you talk to your children about COVID-19?

Although it is tempting to protect your children from such a difficult topic, it is something which they will have seen in the media and discussed with their friends. Being open in conversations about the current situation will cause less anxiety and worry as they will not feel in the dark.

The following tips may be helpful for talking to your children about the situation:

- Try to answer questions openly and honestly but keep them in context and developmentally appropriate.
- Provide reassurance about risk and underline how helpful they are being by doing their bit to limit spread through good hygiene and following the government guidelines to maintain physical distance. Give positive messages about the things you are doing as a family to stay safe.
- Give children the opportunity to talk about their feelings, tell them that what is happening is not normal, but their feelings about the situation are.

Where can I seek further support if needed?

The following table outlines a variety of support channels which may assist you in maintaining positive mental wellbeing as an individual and seeking support for your children if needed. You can also talk to a member of Grace College staff by ringing the school number and choosing the option relevant to your son or daughter's year group.

Focus	Detail	Contact
Mental Health support for adults.	General support for adult mental health. Providing an option to talk through the situation with someone.	Telephone: 116 123 Website: www.samaritans.org/how-can-we-help/contact-samaritan/
Mental Health support for adults.	General support for adult mental health. Providing an option to talk through the situation with someone or access to mutual support communities.	Website: www.mind.org.uk
Supporting Mental Health whilst at home.	Tips from the NHS on how to maintain positive mental wellbeing in the current situation.	Website: https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/
Parenting support.	Free and confidential helpline for emotional support, information, advice and guidance.	Telephone: 08088002222 Website: www.familylives.org.uk
Parenting support.	Free and confidential helpline for emotional support, information, advice and guidance.	Telephone: 08088026666 Website: www.family-action.org.uk
Taking about Coronavirus	A website which provides information about the current situation for young people with additional needs.	Website: www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus
Mental health support for young people	Kooth is a web-based confidential support service available to young people. Kooth provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people	www.kooth.com

Priority 4: Learning from Home

As you think about keeping learning going, we advise you not to put pressure on yourself or your son or daughter, especially at first. Your loving roles as teacher, encourager and discipliner probably have never been more necessary but it will take time to adapt. We know that students are often much faster at handling this than adults, whilst also getting bored much more readily. Adolescents need lots of structure, stimulation and purpose; this won't come from being submerged for hours on Xbox, YouTube or social media. But being engaged in this way is still better than allowing students out and about socialising.

There's lots of information about this online, and here is some of what we think is the best advice:

1. *Social distancing is vital at this point*

'Social distancing', i.e. reducing other forms of contact with others, is key to blocking the virus's spread. A slowed spread means our hospitals are more likely to be able to cope with the demands on intensive care, rather than being overwhelmed by a tidal wave of seriously ill patients. This will then increase the likelihood of members of our families and our communities receiving life-saving treatment and surviving. It's a sacrifice, but effective social distancing can protect *tens (and even hundreds) of thousands* of lives. **Please ensure your son or daughter follows this advice.**

2. *Structure, structure, structure (and flex)*

Aim to put in place some agreed structure. Schools offer a structure for learning which can't be replicated at home but structuring the school day and week really helps to give a clear sense of purposefulness and achievement. But it must suit your family routines so do feel too pressured to adopt the suggestions we make.

We recommend that much more time for flexibility is built into a home-school day. A clear sense of underlying structure though, in timetabling the days of the week, will help students to thrive. We would advise keeping to some sort of daily routine. For example, up and dressed for breakfast by an agreed certain time; and then activities maybe based around following the school timetable, with breaks at mid-morning and lunch.

8am	Get up and get dressed and have some breakfast.
9am	Either start to work or take part in the Body Coach's daily PE lesson via YouTube Live (Joe Wicks Body Coach). Put your phone in a different room. Have a look at assignments that you have been set by your teachers on Microsoft Teams - what are you going to try and get done today? Try and complete at least one assignment before taking a break.
10:30am	Take a break. If you haven't done any exercise yet you could go out for a walk, run or bike ride.
11am	Tackle something else or getting read an online book.
12:30pm	Break for lunch. Take the opportunity to catch up with friends by phone or video-call and to help out around the house.
2pm	Review your to do list from the morning - what's left to finish off? If you do not have any work set do some research on something that you have studied and developed an interest in. Some students are finding it helpful to keep a diary, journal or blog of their experience of our current situation. Take some time to note down your thoughts and reflections on what is happening, you don't need to share it with anyone.
3:20pm	Finish 'work' for the day. If you haven't done any exercise try and fit this in now. Offer to help in the home, now may even be the time to learn to cook and help make dinner!

Try to manage how smartphones are used during the day. If they are the only point of access to the internet, then students will have to be especially diligent to avoid the distractions of social media if they are trying to learn. Of course, there will be some merit in setting a time to meet friends on line.

3. The place of learning

A creative approach to how we use our homes can make a real difference to even the smallest of confined spaces. Daylight is important for all, as well as opening windows to allow in fresh air. Older students need an un-cluttered surface on which to work and periods of quiet; younger students often need much more continuous stimulation, along with a place where they can focus and think without distraction when necessary. Talking about how to manage the home environment is going to be important and the routines that are set up from the start will allow you and your loved ones to navigate through the coming weeks.

4. Resources provided by school

Teachers are making resources available on online via Office 365 and Microsoft Teams. In addition, there is a list of resources on our website too. We also have produced resources in hard copy should you require, and these can be collected from reception. Our aim is to support you by offering some normality and continuity to our students' learning, whilst recognising that this is also a time for parents and students to take time with each other and learn from each other too.

During working hours teachers will be responding to electronic contact from students and/or parents via email or Microsoft Teams.

We encourage all students to **read** every day, as is expected during a normal school week. Students should be reading books in line with their reading ability. Reading regularly will have a significant impact on learning and enjoyment. Reading is powerful in its ability to transport us to "another place". If children do little else, extensive **reading** will be extremely valuable.

5. Free online resources and activities

There are many

Please find below a list of **free** online resources and activities for students to access from home:

Focus	Information	Link information	Age group
Art	The Tate Gallery Website which allows children to <i>learn, explore, create and quiz</i> all things arty,	https://www.tate.org.uk/kids	All years
Cookery Lessons LIVE	Theo Cooks with Kids Every Monday and Wednesday at 4pm enjoy cookery lessons via Instagram or Youtube Live. Ingredients are posted earlier in the day or the day before.	https://www.thecooks.com/kids-cookalong-live/ Instagram page: thecooks	All years
Computer Programming	Blockly Computer programming games	https://blockly.games	All years
Computer Programming	Scratch Creative computer programming	https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games	All years
English -Literature	Memrise Learn and revise key quotations for Literature texts	https://www.memrise.com/courses/english/	Year 10
English -Reading	David Walliams Audiobooks Every day at 11am listen to David Walliams reading	https://www.worldofdavidwalliams.com/elevenses	Year 7 and 8

	one of his <i>World's Worst Children</i> stories		
English - Reading	30 day FREE Trial Audio Books Take your pick from the world's largest selection of audiobooks including best sellers, latest releases, sci-fi, fantasy and more.	https://www.audible.co.uk/	All years
Foreign Languages	Memrise Learn/ develop foreign languages online	https://www.memrise.com/courses/english/	All years
Foreign Languages	DuoLingo Free language courses using the website or mobile app.	www.duolingo.com	All years
Geography	National Geographic Geography activities and quizzes	www.natgeogkids.com/uk/	Year 7
History	The Big History Project A range of history projects, covering lots of different topics.	www.bughistoryproject.com	Year7-9
History, Geography and RE	Inside the museums Virtual tours of many of the best museums in the world.	www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours	All years
Maths and Computing	Khan Academy : Although this website uses a US grading system, most material is relevant to the UK curriculum.	www.khanacademy.org	All years
Maths	White Rose: A set of 5 maths lessons per week for students up to year 8.	www.whiterosemaths.com	Years 7 and 8
Maths	The Maths Factor with Carol Vorderman Lessons, games and rewards to increase confidence in maths	themathsfactor.com	Year 7
PE	Joe Wicks –The Body Coach Live PE lesson for children at 9am every morning.	Instagram: @thebodycoach YouTube: Search Joe Wicks at 8.55 and click on 'Live' in the corner of the screen	All years
PE	Oti Mabuse Dance lessons	Instagram: @OtiMabuse	All years

	Every morning at 11.30am	YouTube: Search Joe Wicks at 8.55 and click on 'Live' in the corner of the screen	
Science	Mystery Science Free fun science lessons.	www.mysteryscience.com	Years 7-9
Science	Crest Awards A range of different science awards.	www.crestawards.org	Years 7-9
Science and Nature	Chris Packham: Nature Live Stream 9am every morning	Instagram: @ChrisGPackham	All years
General	Future Learn Free access to lots of different courses, that can be selected based on interests. This is free unless you wish to pay for certificates to show course completion.	www.futurelearn.com	14+
General	Seneca This includes lots of revision material for students of all age groups.	www.senecalearning.com	All years
General	Open University Free taster courses aimed at those considering university but can be accessed by all.	www.open.edu/openlearn	Year 11 +

In all of this, please endeavour to have precious time together as a family. Enjoy each other's company, have fun, play board games, read books together. The next generation are looking up to us; let's try and work together to make this as positive as we can for them. Learning and fun can and should go together!

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