

## Coronavirus

### Support for Year 11 and beyond

*This leaflet is aimed at the parent(s)/carer(s) of young people in Year 11. There is a corresponding leaflet aimed at young people.*

This leaflet provides information and advice on supporting your child's wellbeing as they leave Year 11 during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also signposting at the end for if you want to seek out further support. Leaving formal education is often an uncertain time. This is likely to be magnified given the current uncertainty and worry due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your child may also feel a sense of sudden loss as what they have been working towards has ceased (e.g. their exams, leaving school, celebrating with friends). This loss can bring up a range of **rational** and **appropriate** emotions (sadness, worry, frustration, and confusion) which can be called **grief**.

### What might this grief look like?

You may notice they have gone or are going through a cycle of **denial > anger/frustration > bargaining > low mood > acceptance** (see below table). There may not be a clear "cause", it may not include all of these stages or be in this particular order. So it can feel hard to know how to then know what to do, when in doubt aim to be a "companion" for them, where you can be a source of support in a way that works for them. This may start with listening to concerns and asking questions with curiosity.

The following table gives examples of how the stages of grief may look and some strategies.

<b>Denial</b>	<p><i>Child: "I can't believe this is happening" (avoidance; confusion; elation; shock)</i></p> <p><b>Try to:</b> monitor feelings/behaviour, active listening.</p>
<b>Anger</b>	<p><i>Child: "Why is this happening? It's not fair!" (Frustration; irritation; anxiety)</i></p> <p><b>Try to:</b> validate feelings, sympathise, signpost and inform</p>
<b>Bargaining</b>	<p><i>Child: "What can I do to change this, I'll do anything!" (Struggling to find meaning; reaching out to others; telling their story)</i></p> <p><b>Try to:</b> explore coping approaches</p>
<b>Low Mood</b>	<p><i>Child: "What was the point in coming to school at all?" (Overwhelmed, Helplessness, Hostility, Flight)</i></p> <p><b>Try to:</b> normalise and model emotions, monitor feelings/behaviour, active listening, seek additional support where needed (see resources in this leaflet)</p>
<b>Acceptance</b>	<p><i>Child: "Maybe it all work out in the end" (Exploring options; new plans made)</i></p> <p><b>Try to:</b> Plan with them (see young person leaflet for a template)</p>

Some of these strategies are explained below in more detail:

- **Monitor feelings/behaviour:** you might use a scale from 0-10 to ask how worried/upset/angry they are, if they do not want to talk about their feelings.

- **Active listening:**
  - **Attention** (try not to interject with a response, remove unhelpful distractions, notice their body language).
  - **Acknowledge** (smile and nod when appropriate, try to mirror their body language or keep your posture open and interested, encourage them to continue talking with small comments like "yes" "uh huh" "okay").
  - **Ask/feedback** (repeat important things they say or paraphrase, ask questions to clarify points, summarise what they are saying periodically).
  - **Accept/non-judgement** (allow them to finish each point before asking questions, avoid arguing).
  - **Answer:** Your response does not have to always be a solution, if they are not ready to hear it. Share opinions respectfully and compassionately, be honest in your response.
- **Explore coping approaches:** If your teen is receptive to trying out some ideas to maintain their wellbeing, you may want to try an app or video to help. These can include: mindfulness (see Headspace and Smiling Mind apps). See the websites at the end for more sources of coping approaches.
- **Plan with them:** there is an activity in the young person leaflet you can complete with them to explore their thoughts. You may want to use the active listening approaches when completing this.
- **Seek additional support:** there may be a point where you or your child need to seek additional support. Please find these at the end of the leaflet.

### How can I support my child's wellbeing more generally?

Hobfoll et al. (2007) identified five key principles that support recovery following a serious



incident. These help to think about how your family can support wellbeing during this periods (principles are also in the post-16 leaflet):

### 1. Feeling Safe

Consider having a clear routine and structure linked to measurable activities in the day and downtime in the evening can help maintain a sense of normalcy. It also provides a plan to fall back on when things become chaotic or confusing for you or them. Try to limit the amount of screen-time and news they access in a day. As they are becoming more socially aware, worry can develop about safety and re-entering the community. It may help to talk about the news in a calm way.

### 2. Feeling Calm

Find ways to “check-in” during the day. This may be face-to-face or asking them to text you an update. It may simply be a rating from 1 to 10 depending on how comfortable they feel talking about emotions. You may want to model this by doing the same with them in a reassuring way to help normalise being sad/frustrated/scared. Mindfulness-based approaches can help. Apps such as headspace and smiling mind have a range of resources for both staff and students.

When it comes to emotions, you may feel your teen prefers to “do” rather than “talk”. Perhaps suggest some of the following activities or observe if you see them already using these:

- Music/videos; taking “time out” away from the family to unwind; taking up a new or existing hobby; speaking to friends (who you know of) on the phone or online; talking or venting about their feelings to you.



### 3. Feeling in control

Currently, much of what we can or cannot do has been shaped by restrictions. This can be particularly tough give those leaving Year 11 will be hoping for more options and, as teenagers, are likely to want to resist rules and authority. Helping to discuss what they can change and accepting what they cannot will be important. Tools such as the Worry Tree (below) can be used to have these conversations.



### 4. Feeling connected

Your teen is likely already finding ways to connect with others (phone, online, social media). If you notice a big change in how much they reach out, this can be an understandable response during the pandemic. But if it is affecting their feelings and behaviours for most of the day, it is helpful to talk with them to understand how they feel and the impact of withdrawing. You may want to suggest a family friend that they can speak to for an outside voice.



### 5. Feeling hopeful

Hope is seen as something that can be practiced and developed. Practicing hope will look different for each child, hopefully active listening practices and curiosity will help you to better understand how they may practice hope. You may want to do this as a family by each sharing three things you are grateful for that day. Or maybe try this with feelings or achievements. You can find a young person leaflet on the Octavo website under the “resources” tab. This contains an activity called “your path”, which can be completed together or by the young person. It outlines goals for the future and practice hope.

#### Useful Resources

- [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) Moderated online wellbeing community. Offers free and anonymous advice.
- YoungMinds - [www.youngminds.com](http://www.youngminds.com) – Information on child and adolescent mental health. Parent Helpline Mon-Fri, 09:30am – 4pm: 0808 802 5544
- YoungMinds Crisis Messenger – free, 24/7 mental health crisis support. Text YM to 85258.
- Childline - [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) – Free, 24/7, confidential phone line, under 19s: 080901111
- The Mix - [www.TheMix.org.uk](http://www.TheMix.org.uk) – emotional support including online or phone counselling service. Helpline 4-11pm: 0808 808 4994
- Samaritans – [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) - emotional support service for anyone in distress or at risk of suicide. 24/7 Freephone: 116 123. 24/7 email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/)
- We also have an Octavo parent advice line: <https://www.octavopartnership.org/news/educational-psychology-service-parent-advice-line/>

