

Factsheet Four:

A Nurturing Environment



To help support you during COVID-19, we have created a series of factsheets, designed to offer some support and strategies, whatever your situation, and are based on what we know about people's responses to traumatic events and what can help.

Being safe emotionally and physically is the basic need all humans have. It is often something we take for granted.

Living with COVID-19 has forced us all into a situation previously unimaginable. The safety in our lives we had previously taken for granted has gone and for many of us already living with fear and uncertainty this pandemic has only increased the sense of vulnerability. The situation may have highlighted difficult living arrangements that were just about sustainable before, but with the enforcement of lockdown, the stress of living as a carer (to elderly parents or sick children) or being dependant on someone else (due to illness or lack of finances) will have increased the lack of personal safety. Families used to being at work and children used to being in school face huge challenges suddenly being stuck together without the normal routines of daily life. With the schools shut we are also suddenly thrust into a world where we are expected to become teachers and maybe even support our children with subjects we know nothing about. Social distancing means outside access is limited and unless we are lucky enough to have gardens our children are stuck indoors with conflicting wants and needs.

The aim of these factsheets is to give you some strategies to look after your children by looking after yourself. If you have ever flown on a plane, you may remember the air steward safety briefing – 'in the event of loss of oxygen, a mask will drop down in front of you. PUT YOUR OWN MASK ON first before helping others'. In effect if you don't you will pass out before you can help anyone else. It's the same in this crisis, to help your children you need to be able to look after your own emotional health and safety first.

We can assume that during these difficult times as parents the expectations and demands on you may have changed a lot. Relationships within families can become strained as we find ourselves with different responsibilities (parent + teacher + homemaker + partner + cook etc) Some of us are still having to go out to work and may be in industries where we are at increased risk of catching COVID-19 and may have huge anxieties about not just catching the virus, but passing it on to our families.

This factsheet is focusing on how we create and maintain a nurturing environment for our children and ourselves during these changing times. A nurturing environment is one that gives children the security and opportunity to discover themselves and their world. In a nurturing environment families listen to each other and respond with care and support to each others changing needs. In these challenging times, aiming for a nurturing environment will help all family members cope better with the added stress and strain.



All the topics we have covered so far – safety , connectedness and resilience will all help to build a nurturing environment.

The love and care wheels below are a great way to start to do this together as a family.

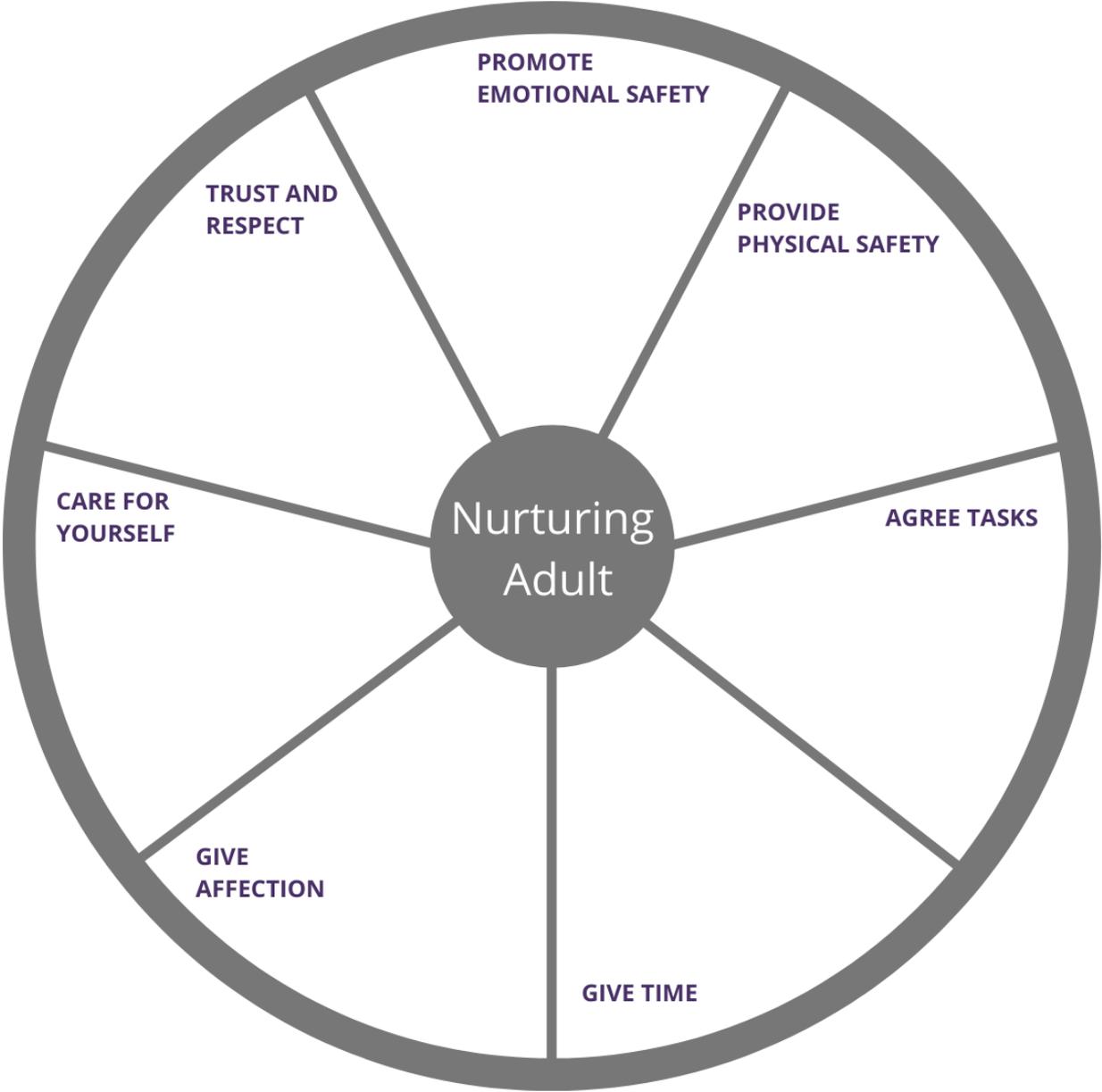
Have a look at the first wheel. How many of the sections can you complete? Ask your child to help you. You can even do this activity with older children and get their feedback on how they think you are doing!

The next wheel is for you to complete yourself and maybe with your partner to see how you are doing to nurture and support each other.

LOVE AND CARE FOR YOUR CHILDREN



LOVE AND CARE FOR EACH OTHER



Child activity planner



The activity I chose with my child was:

This week, the things I felt good about as a parent were:

The things my child and I did together were (be specific):

The things I praised my child for were:

The things I found difficult were:

Things I regret were:



Adult activity planner



The activity I chose was:

This week, the things I felt good about as an adult were:

The things I did for me, were (be specific):

The things I praised myself about were:

The things I found difficult were:

Things I regret were:



Have a watch of these videos on mindfulness and meditation. This reinforces the previous information we have given you and again taking 10 minutes a day to focus, as the speaker recommends, is nurturing and provides self-care for you. Perhaps it is something everyone in the family could practice:

<https://youtu.be/qzR62JJCMBQ>

Meditation getting started: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_yXe_6mYTA

Mini Meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Ndym-lsQg>

Guided 10-minute Meditation with Andy Puddicombe:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVzTnS_IONU

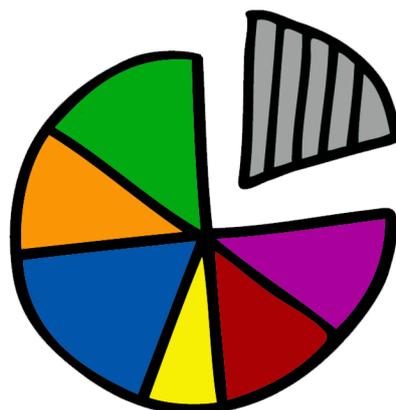
This link takes you to a page with loads of indoor activities you can do with your children:

https://www.scouts.org.uk/the-great-indoors/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4dr0BRCxARIsAKUNjWS_Ehtr_o7fp9XN4U5-NtXAGAR2fSOyxO0qL_CnwHX78rqnpJf1kKwgaAqjjEALw_wcB

There is a real chance that for some people days become monotonous and boring. Repeating what we said earlier it's important to stick to routine. An activity the whole family can do to help this is 'MATCHING THE PIES'.

All the family draw a circle and then divide the sections into Pie slices to indicate how they are spending the day. Share this together and see if peoples pie slices are similar or hugely different, can you match any? There is opportunity then to negotiate appropriate time to have a balance of activity. One of the slices may also need to be shared time, like sitting at the table to eat, or play a game together. Try and think about how you can make weekends different, otherwise days just blur which can become quite disorientating for adults and children.

For example: Green is sleeping, orange is school work, purple is playing on devices and so on.



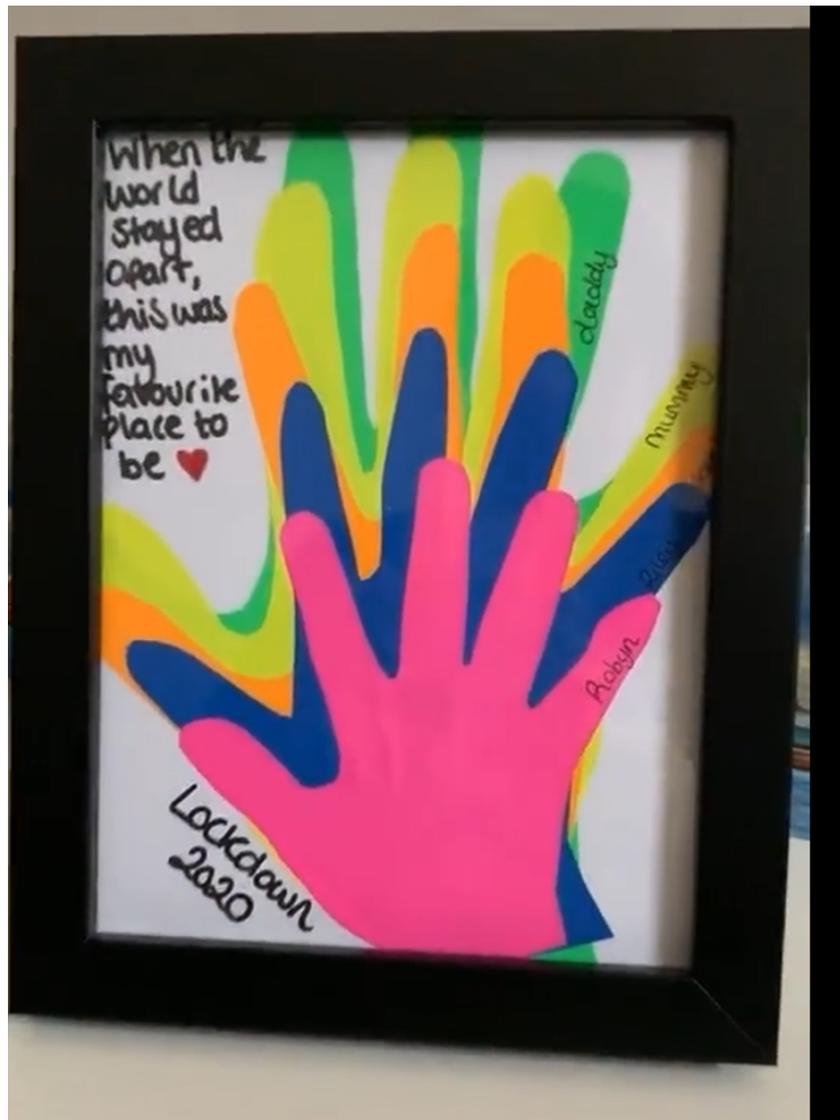
Another activity for the whole family which encompasses – safety, connectedness and resilience is making a hand picture.

Every member of the family draws around their hand. Using colour paper or card but alternatively just colour the hand in once you have drawn around it.



Each person writes their name on their hand and then cuts out the shape. You then layer the hands on top of one another so the names are readable and stick together and mount it on a larger piece of paper. You can then label it COVID-19 and ask each member of the family to write something positive about their experience on the sides of the picture.

You can keep it as a reminder when lockdown is lifted.



This is what a finished version can look like and you can also put it in a frame.

Finally this activity form the Australian Childhood foundation describes how to make a hug and also can be used to explain a bit more about COVID-19 to smaller children.

Make Your Own Hug

Many Ways to Share a Hug



Illustrated by Jess Racklyeft



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

childhood.org.au

Hugs work to help people feel close. Did you know that love pops up inside us when we share a hug with people we feel close to; love can't help it, it enjoys the connection and the snuggling in. Hugs adore it when love appears. They think that working closely with love is the best job in the world.

Sometimes things get in the way of hugs, like the **coronavirus**.

Thankfully some hugs are still going strong even with the virus around; like the ones people are sharing at home. However, other ones, like with friends, or nannas and pas, or other family, have had to take a break.



Hugs are not happy about this. They realise that their work is very needed at the moment. They have had a meeting and have all agreed that they are going to work harder and in more ways than usual for a while, just until things get back to normal.

“This is an official announcement from the Hugs, for the next little while there are extra ways that people can share hugs.”



Here are some official ways to share hugs right now:

- * By **staying at home**
- * By **sharing kind words**
- * By **doing thoughtful things** for others
- * By **keeping others in mind**
- * By **caring for animals and nature**
- * By **connecting with kindness with others online**
- * By **sharing a joke** or something funny
- * By **helping someone**
- * By sharing something **we create**

Can you think of some of the ways you and your family are sharing any of these different kinds of hugs at the moment?

Have you noticed that others are sharing some of these different kinds of **hugs** with us right now?
For example:

- * **Nurses and doctors and pharmacists** are helping people who are sick with the coronavirus get better
- * **Scientists** are working out how to help us get over the coronavirus
- * Our **leaders** are trying to help us know what to do to keep coronavirus away
- * People on the **radio, T.V. and online** are keeping us entertained and informed
- * **Workers at the supermarket** are selling us our food and drink
- * **Cleaners** are wiping away the coronavirus
- * **Police** are helping people do the right thing
- * **Farmers** are growing the food we eat
- * **Bakers** are baking our bread
- * **Workers** are delivering things we need
- * **Workers** are keeping our electricity, gas, and water going
- * **Tech people** are keeping our internet working
- * **Counselors** are helping children and families



Hugs are looking forward to getting back to more of their usual work.
Who knows they might decide to return to their original job.
but also keep these extra ways of hugging as well? What do you think?

This week's factsheet has focused on the need to nurture our family and therefore reinforcing, safety, connectedness and resilience.